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The real start of F1's latest great rivalry?

That's what we wanted – and perhaps what Formula 1 needed. For the first time in the turbo-hybrid era, Red Bull has started a season on the front foot. Yes, Lewis Hamilton still managed to take a narrow victory for Mercedes last weekend, but it looks as though Max Verstappen has the car to take on the seven-time champion.

It's still early days, of course, and Bahrain hasn't been the best track for Mercedes in recent years. You'd still have to be brave to bet against Hamilton at this stage. But Verstappen should have won and the Red Bull advantage in qualifying – nearly 0.4 seconds – was significant.

Part of the turnaround is believed to be down to the new rules hurting the teams with a 'low-rake' philosophy, such as Mercedes (see page 4).

From a fan's perspective, the important thing is that it raises the prospect of a genuine battle between two of the real stars of recent years. As Alex Kalinauckas shows in our race report (p18), there were a number of small factors that led to Verstappen's defeat and Hamilton, who has always said he likes a good fight, knows this season could be rather different to the ones he has enjoyed of late.

- One daft thing about F1 was demonstrated by Valtteri Bottas at Sakhir. Never in the lead fight, he stopped for fresh rubber, set fastest lap by 1.1 seconds and scored an extra point. This isn't what the point for fastest lap was meant to be about. Time to scrap it.



Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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NEXT WEEK
8 APRIL

Hamilton's biggest threat
We speak to Red Bull's Max Verstappen as he gears up to take on Lewis

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F1 How Lewis beat faster Red Bull in Bahrain

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MERCEDES 'NEEDS A FASTER CAR' TO DEFEAT RED BULL

FORMULA 1

Lewis Hamilton helped Mercedes to victory in the Formula 1 season opener in Bahrain, but it is Red Bull that has a genuine pace advantage.

A combination of an aggressive strategy from Mercedes, plus some great tyre management and defensive driving from Hamilton, was enough for him to hold off Max Verstappen for the win at Sakhir (see page 18).

Yet that success has not disguised the fact that Red Bull's RB16B appears to hold the edge right now in speed terms – both on the straights and in the high-speed corners, where Mercedes has excelled in the past.

"We don't really have any strengths relative to them," said Mercedes head of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin.

"We've had a lot of years where we've been able to rely on straightline speed, or high-speed cornering or interconnecting corners. But you look at it here and we weren't taking any time out of them anywhere."

"And that's really the main thing. In qualifying we're just bang on

their pace in our best corners and they're quicker in the others. So we need a faster car, as simple as that."

Mercedes is still battling to find a good balance with its W12, and matters were not helped in Bahrain with it encountering some derating issues with its power unit – where its energy recovery systems run out of power too early on the straights.

Verstappen's pace in qualifying, where he ended up 0.388 seconds clear of Hamilton, showed the kind of performance advantage that Red Bull may have right now. Perhaps the biggest sign of the step forward that Red Bull has made is that it ended up so disappointed to lose out on the win – whereas in 2020 every second place was a bonus.

"Last year we would have been super-happy with this result and now we are disappointed, so we definitely made a good step forward," said Verstappen. "Of course it is still a long season, so we just have to get on with it and try to do better."

One factor that appears to have played a decisive swing in the battle between Mercedes and Red Bull is the impact of F1's new 2021 aero rules. In particular, the changes to the floor – with a section ahead of

the rear tyres having been cut away and the use of slots and holes along the side banned – appear to have hurt low-rake cars such as the Mercedes more than high-rake concepts such as Red Bull's.

Aston Martin team boss Otmar Szafnauer suggested over the Bahrain GP weekend that the data pointed to the swing between the high-rake and low-rake cars being as much as one second per lap.

Comparisons of the qualifying times from 2020 to 2021 showed that Red Bull, AlphaTauri and McLaren had all lost 1.3–1.4s over the winter, while Mercedes and Aston were more than 2s down.

While the floor changes may explain what has happened, Mercedes knows it cannot use that as an excuse for letting the 2021 title battle slip away from its grasp. Team boss Toto Wolff said: "If we say, 'Well, we were just penalised by the regulation, that's it,' we wouldn't be racers and we wouldn't be fighters. We just need to get that car in its sweet spot so it can combat with our competitors."

Mercedes' bid to fight back and make up for the deficit, especially in high-speed corners, is complicated

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Hamilton held off Verstappen but the Red Bull currently seems the faster machine



ETHERINGTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

by the homologation limits imposed on teams this year as part of the COVID-19 cost cuts – which means it can't upgrade its engine or devote too much resource to aero gains.

Furthermore, teams are juggling the need to work on 2022's new F1 cars with pushing on with improving their current challengers.

Showlin (above) added: "We're having to look at more subtle areas to do with driveability characteristics and also arriving at the circuit with the car well sorted, well balanced, doing your homework, knowing how long the tyres will run.

"This championship is going to come down to the fine margins, more than normal. I don't see us really being able to develop to a point where we can get clear ahead and hopefully Red Bull won't either."

JONATHAN NOBLE

 P18 BAHRAIN GP REPORT

CALL TO BIN COST CAP FOR SPRINT RACES

FORMULA 1

Red Bull boss Christian Horner reckons top F1 teams need the series cost cap to be lifted in order to afford to run the planned sprint races at Silverstone, Monza and Interlagos.

At these three events, conventional qualifying will be shifted to Friday afternoon, with a 62-mile sprint race on Saturday deciding the final grid for the main race on Sunday.

F1 chiefs are offering an extra payment to cover potential costs, including damage. But big-spending teams want as much as \$1million extra and a lift in the cost cap.

This idea has not got



universal support from teams, with some outfits fearing that lifting the restrictions will open the door to bigger outfits using the extra finances to fund performance gains.

Horner said: "If you divide \$145m by 23 events, you can see what it takes to operate a grand prix car. Adding in effectively shortened races is just more cost that we're naturally going to incur.

"There just has to be a sensible allowance that takes that into account, because we're chasing £10,000, £20,000, £30,000 savings at the moment to ensure that we're hitting the cap. To suddenly have a variable like this is something that just needs to be accommodated. We're keen to support it but there needs to be an accommodation."

JONATHAN NOBLE

FIA ramps up strict car checks

FORMULA 1

The FIA has told Formula 1 teams it will routinely undertake more thorough technical checks after each grand prix.

Finishing cars are always weighed, measured and have fuel samples checked before the results are made official. Now, the FIA will randomly select one car for a much more detailed examination, and potentially a stripping of components.

For transparency, the FIA wants to make it clear the selection process is not based on any specific suspicions.

Teams are expected to ensure their engineers are available to co-operate with any investigation if necessary. They may also be asked to sign a declaration

that their second car is of identical specification to the one examined.

The process also means that official results will be marked as being subject to technical checks and that, should any irregularities be found, those results could change long after Sunday evening.

A bulletin issued by the FIA stewards noted: "Should any irregularity be subsequently discovered, the technical delegate will publish a report and the stewards have ordered the technical delegate to take the appropriate steps to safeguard any evidence that may be discovered in these technical checks, including impounding and sealing relevant parts and information."

ADAM COOPER



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WRC teams commit to FIA's hybrid future

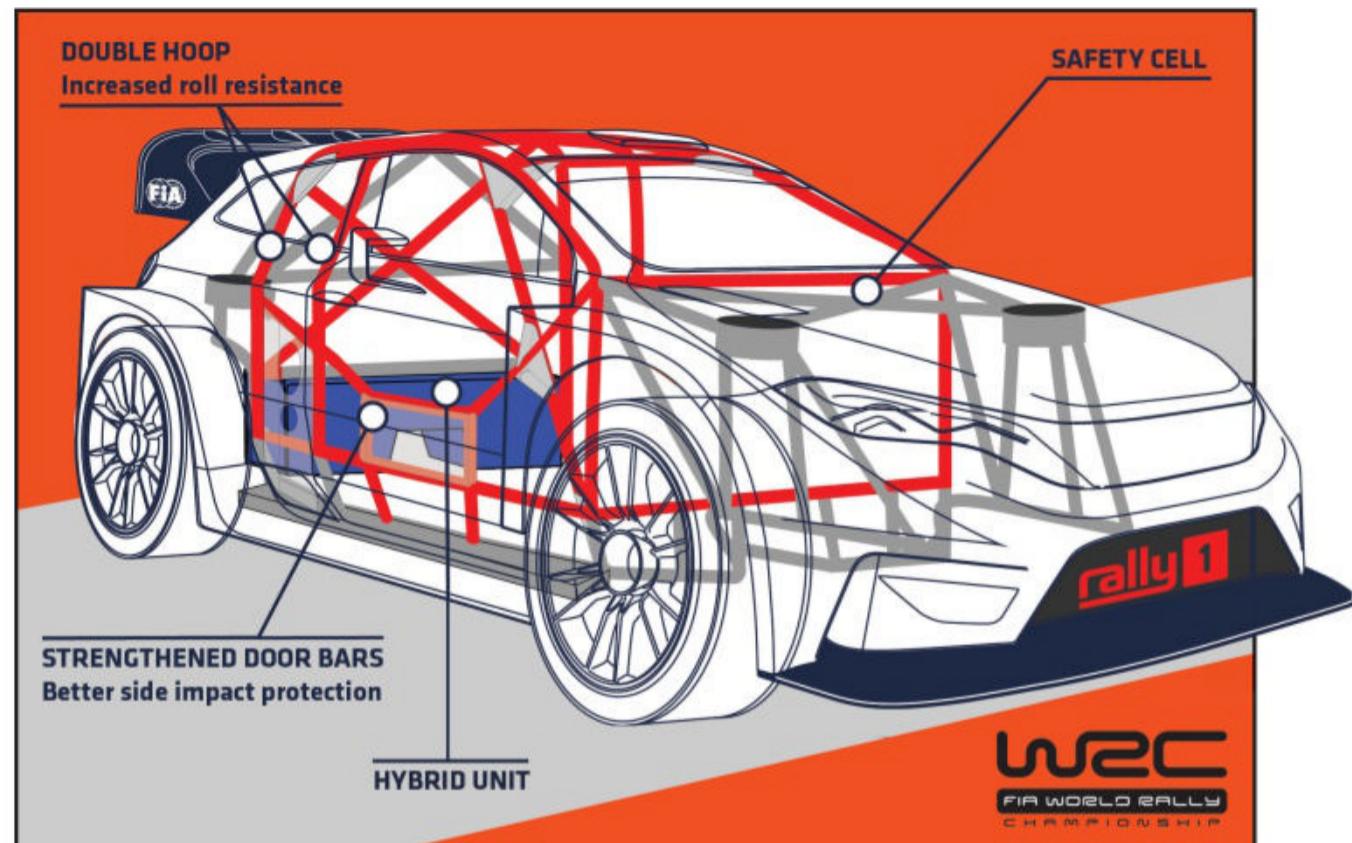
WRC

World Rally Championship manufacturers Hyundai, Toyota and M-Sport have committed to the hybrid future of the series in a deal announced by the FIA this week.

Hybrid power will be introduced into the top tier of the WRC next season and a new three-year agreement means the system will be developed with the FIA and the three biggest competitors working together, funding work done by Compact Dynamics and Kreisel Electric. The announcement also confirms Hyundai's continued participation, which is believed to have been a topic of discussion at board level.

The main focus of the agreement for the Rally1 category, which has already received approval from the World Motor Sport Council, is "safety, cost management and sustainability", according to an FIA statement.

"In this joint initiative, the FIA and WRC Teams are committing equally to the development of the hybrid technology," continued the statement.

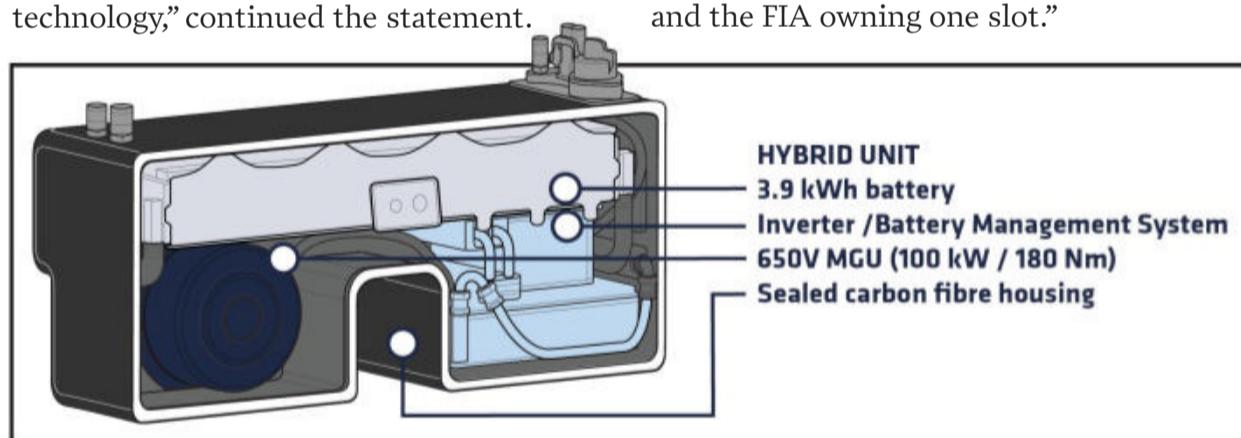


"In addition, the FIA introduces an innovative partnership model based on a three-year cycle, unlike the current annual commitment, which will offer better stability and planning opportunities as well as a new marketable asset for all parties. Through this model, the participation in the FIA World Rally Championship will shift in 2022 to a system of four slots, with each of the three current manufacturers and the FIA owning one slot."

After doubt about the WRC's future following the withdrawal of Citroen ahead of 2020 and the truncated calendar last season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the news is a boost for the pinnacle of rallying and should ensure the continued fight between the teams that have dominated since Volkswagen left at the end of 2016.

FIA President Jean Todt said: "The WRC is on the brink of reaching an important milestone with the new-generation cars, Rally1. A switch to plug-in hybrid power reflects the latest trends in the automotive industry, at the same time making the sport more sustainable."

"The fact that all three of the brands currently involved in the championship committed for a further three years proves that world rallying is heading in the right direction. And this comes together with the transition to sustainable energy, which is one of the main objectives of the FIA and its Purpose Driven movement."



Ben Sulayem launches bid for FIA presidency

FIA

Ex-rally driver Mohammed ben Sulayem has launched a campaign to become the next president of the FIA after Jean Todt's final term ends in December.

The move comes eight years after ben Sulayem, 59, planned to challenge Todt in the 2013 election, only to withdraw at a late stage. He was involved in the creation of the Abu Dhabi GP and is an ally of Max Mosley.

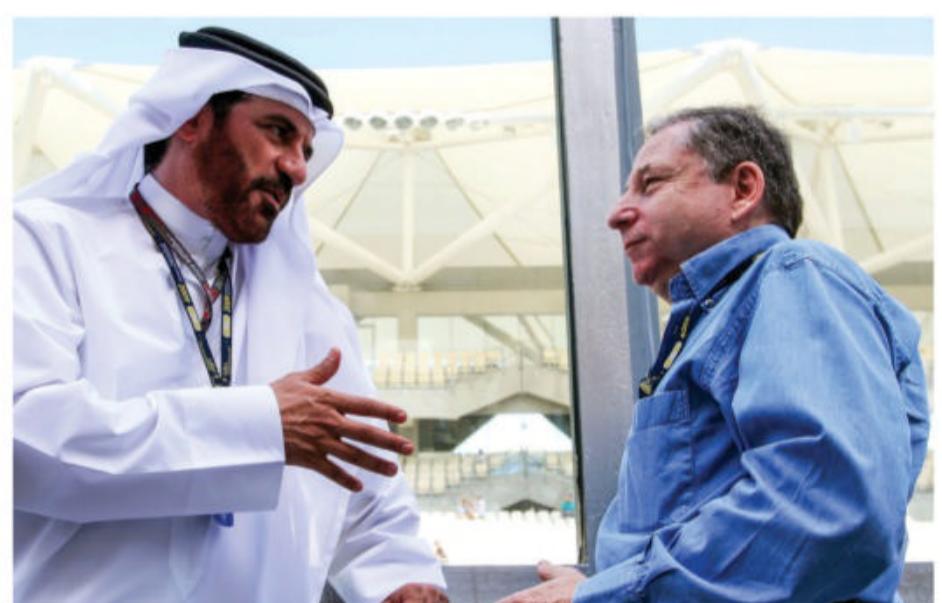
No other contenders have

come forward yet but the Emirati, a 14-time Middle East rally champion, may face a candidate endorsed by Todt, who is keen to ensure his legacy is continued.

Ben Sulayem has picked Robert Reid, the 2001 WRC title-winning co-driver to Richard Burns, as deputy.

Ben Sulayem promises a "fresh approach" and says "the FIA must encourage a culture of democratic and transparent governance".

ADAM COOPER



SUTTON/MOTORSPORTIMAGES



HAWKINS

BTCC elite test their new toys

BTCC

A smorgasbord of British Touring Car Championship stars and race winners have been getting to grips with different machinery in recent days after a hectic 2020-21 silly season.

Brands Hatch was the busiest venue, with Jake Hill having his first runout in the Ford Focus operated by the new MB Motorsport/Motorbase Performance alliance, Adam Morgan and Tom Chilton getting down to business in Ciceley Motorsport's new BMW 330i M Sports, West Surrey Racing returnee Stephen Jelley sliding behind the wheel of a 330i for the first time, and Jack Goff and Aron Taylor-Smith putting mileage on the new-build Team Hard Cupra Leons.

MB and Motorbase had already been pounding around with Ollie Jackson, Sam Osborne and Andy Neate. This trio was all present at Brands when Hill got his first experience of Ford Focus power. "I have to take my hat off to everyone at Motorbase and my number one mechanic Ben Tyler for building the car since Christmas," said Hill. "It's the first time in my career I've had a brand-new racing car!"

Morgan and Chilton had already given their WSR-built BMWs a shakedown run at Donington Park when they rocked up at Brands. Ciceley reported that its duo, plus WSR trio Colin Turkington, Tom Oliphant and Jelley, were all extremely close on lap times. "They absolutely love the car," said Ciceley commercial director Norman Burgess. "Adam had to wring the neck

of the Merc [which he has raced since 2014] to get a time out of it, but in the Beemer he's having to force himself not to overdrive."

Goff and Taylor-Smith joined Hard team-mates Glynn Geddie and Nic Hamilton behind the wheel of the new Cupras. They were all pleased with progress, although Hamilton, who has cerebral palsy, reported that modifications need to be made to his seating position.

Meanwhile, Rory Butcher got his hands on the Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla for the first time at Donington Park. Butcher and Sam Smelt had a day there, before heading to Snetterton for two more days later in the week. "Straight away, one of the first bits of feedback I gave is that the car instils confidence in the driver, and quite quickly I was able to push for lap times," said Butcher. "It was a very encouraging first run."

Speedworks was joined at Donington by Power Maxed Racing, with two-time champion Jason Plato, following his 2020 sabbatical, returning to the cockpit of the Vauxhall Astra for the first time in 53 weeks. New team-mate Dan Lloyd ran alongside him in the sister car.

"We had about 30 to 40 minutes to just go round and blow the cobwebs off, but within six laps I was on the numbers and it came flooding back," said Plato. "We made good progress. A lot of the day was geared around giving Dan an idea of what I found worked and didn't work in 2019 to try and calibrate what he likes in the car."

MARCUS SIMMONS

IN THE HEADLINES

RUSSELL REPLACES GROSJEAN...

...as a director of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association to work alongside fellow director Sebastian Vettel and chairman Alex Wurz. The 23-year-old Williams Formula 1 racer wants to use his position to represent "the younger half of the grid".

TICKTUM RETAINS F1 ROLE

Meanwhile at Grove, Williams has kept hold of two-time Macau Grand Prix victor Dan Ticktum to serve as its development driver in 2021. He took on the position last season, one year after being dropped from the Red Bull junior programme.

CAMPOS SIGNS TOTH FOR F3

Formula Renault Eurocup backmarker Laszlo Toth has completed the Campos Racing line-up for the FIA Formula 3 Championship. The Hungarian joins fellow Renault graduates Lorenzo Colombo and Amaury Cordeel at the team. Just three of the 30 F3 seats remain unassigned – one at Carlin and two at Charouz.

SAUCY'S RIVALS TO CATCH-UP

Formula Regional European by Alpine testing continued with two days at Barcelona. All the top times came on the second morning, with Gregoire Saucy (ART Grand Prix) leading from Patrik Pasma (KIC Motorsport) and Mercedes F1 junior Paul Aron (Prema Powerteam). Reigning Spanish F4 champion Kas Haverkort has been confirmed with MP Motorsport for the season – he was sixth fastest.

WRX SET FOR EURO TOUR

World Rallycross has revealed a revised European-based 2021 calendar. Hell leads the 10 rounds across 12-13 June as Spa moves from being the season-opener to closing the campaign over 9-10 October. The new all-electric RX2e series will feature at all but the Latvian event.

SNOW CANCELS NLS OPENER

The first round of the Nürburgring Endurance Series was cancelled due to heavy snowfall last weekend. The four-hour race attracted a 144-car entry, including 28 GT3 machines. Ex-Formula 1 driver Robert Kubica and Indianapolis 500 regular Pippa Mann were due to make their Nordschleife debuts, while British 'Ring regulars Dan Harper and Ben Tuck were set for their GT3 bows.



Porsche commits to FE amid latest calendar setbacks

FORMULA E

Only two races into its second season in Formula E, Porsche has pledged its future to the championship until at least 2026 after signing up to the new Gen3 rules that will introduce lighter, smaller and more powerful cars.

It becomes the fourth automotive manufacturer – alongside Mahindra, DS Automobiles and Nissan – to back the new rules as the grid for Gen3, arriving for the 2022-23 campaign, begins to take shape.

This guarantee to remain in the electric series comes despite the German sportscar firm recently placing a “huge investment” in the development of synthetic fuels.

Fritz Enzinger, vice president of Porsche Motorsport, said: “With our entry in 2019, we made a clear commitment to Formula E. From our point of view, it offers the most competitive environment to advance the development of high-performance vehicles with a focus on eco-friendliness, energy efficiency and sustainability.

“The previous season confirmed this, despite the raft of pandemic-related restrictions. It was important for us that the DNA of Formula E, which has made the championship so successful, was preserved. That’s happened [with Gen3].

“At the same time, we see potential to take Formula E to the next level from a sporting and technological point of view.”

Porsche was involved in discussions with Formula E and the FIA when it came to the formation of the new regulations for the 470bhp machines.

ROME AND VALENCIA DOUBLE UP AS MARRAKECH IS SET TO BE DROPPED

Meanwhile, the Rome and Valencia rounds have been modified to become double-header events in 2021, while Marrakech is set to fall off the calendar.

With one week to go until the Italian event, in the latest alteration to the schedule, the Rome event in the EUR region will now run across 10-11 April.

A statement explained Formula E is continuing to “monitor the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic”.

An inaugural Spanish round, the Valencia E-Prix at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo, has also been boosted to a double-header across 24-25 April.

Autosport understands this calendar change is in part due to the fifth running of the Marrakech E-Prix, scheduled for 22 May, being cancelled.

A round in Morocco was not on the provisional 2021 calendar and is known not to be favoured by championship organisers, but was recalled in January to bolster the schedule.

Morocco is still in a partial state of lockdown, and the government has extended the state of emergency in the country until 10 April, with flights suspended from the UK.

MATT KEW



Brands pushes back GT date

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

The Brands Hatch round of the GT World Challenge Europe set for May has been pushed back to August in the hope the event can welcome spectators through the door.

Britain’s only fixture on the 2021 GTWCE calendar, originally the opening event of the Sprint Cup leg of the series, will now take place on 28-29 August. The new date was revealed last week after an initial postponement from the 1-2 May weekend was announced earlier in March. It means Brands will become the fourth of the five sprint weekends, with Magny-Cours scheduled for 8-9 May becoming the first.

“Taking place over the final weekend in August will ensure a far greater opportunity to welcome fans to the Kent circuit, which has drawn enthusiastic crowds since becoming part of the series in 2014,” read a statement from the Stephane Ratel Organisation, which runs the GTWCE. “Like the traditional May fixture the new date also falls on a Bank Holiday weekend, giving fans the ideal opportunity to soak up the atmosphere during two busy days of on-track action.”

Brands is returning to the GTWCE calendar after a year’s absence: the event planned for early May last year was cancelled along with the Silverstone enduro set for the following weekend as the COVID pandemic escalated. Silverstone did not return to the schedule this year as a result of concerns over Brexit.

The GTWCE is scheduled to kick off with the Monza Endurance Cup round on 18 April.

GARY WATKINS





WSC

PURE ETCR The stunning Alfa Romeo Giulia electric touring car that will be entered by the Romeo Ferraris squad into the inaugural season of Pure ETCR has taken to the track for the first time at Vallelunga. Former IndyCar racer Stefano Coletti, hired as the team's first driver, was tasked with the bulk of the running. The road car's 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 produces 502bhp. But that pales in comparison to the racer's 670bhp (500kW) of poke. Mario Ferraris, Romeo Ferraris' technical director, completed the first shakedown in the circuit's paddock. He said: "I was amazed to realise that the car is really fun to drive and also very fast. For me, it was kind of rediscovering the rear-wheel-drive touring cars of years ago, although the powerplant is very different."

Loeb's 'loss of mutual trust' behind Elena split

DAKAR RALLY

Nine-time World Rally Champion Sébastien Loeb says "a loss of mutual trust" between him and co-driver Daniel Elena caused the pair to split after 23 years together.

Loeb took each of his 79 WRC wins between 2002 and 2018 with Elena by his side, and together the Citroën pair won the title every year between 2004 and 2012 – Loeb's final full season in the championship.

They subsequently competed together on all five of Loeb's Dakar Rally starts, but a fraught 2021 event with the Prodrive-run Bahrain Raid Xtreme BRX1 that resulted in retirement led to a breakdown in relations.

Speaking to *DNA Sports*, Loeb said: "I do not question his potential or his qualities as a co-driver, especially in the WRC."

"We were no longer in harmony inside the car. There were misunderstandings, a loss of mutual trust. Sometimes he would tell me things I didn't believe in. Other times, I was stubborn when he was right."

"There were tensions and conflicts there had never been before. I don't blame him for anything, but we got a little lost."

"I really hope he will be able to move past that and retain the good memories. I have no doubt we will still have a good time at a rally or around a BBQ."

JASON CRAIG



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Questions raised after IndyCar 'hybrid' test

INDYCAR

IndyCar's test to simulate the effects of the hybrid engines has provided plenty of questions about the system's introduction.

Scott Dixon, Josef Newgarden, Alexander Rossi and Pato O'Ward ran at Indianapolis Motor Speedway last Friday, using the push-to-pass system at 1.5-bar to simulate the burst of energy from a KERS unit.

IndyCar will replace the current 2.2-litre twin-turbo V6s with KERS-supplemented 2.4-litre twin-turbo V6s in 2023, with the target being a combined 900bhp by 2025.

IndyCar president Jay Frye admitted the test had not been completely satisfactory but had offered some "good learning".

"We came thinking this would precipitate more questions than answers, and that's probably what happened," said Frye. "So that's fine. We're looking at how this could work with the new hybrid system."

"If you think about 2023, in addition to the new engine – the 2.4-litre twin-turbo V6 which will have another 100bhp – the new hybrid system, too, will have the ability to have an additional 100 more horsepower. So how does that work? With the push-to-

pass system we have with the current engine, we can simulate a little bit how it could work, which is what we tried to do."

"I think [the drivers] had some moments... going into a corner – instead of at 230[mph] they were going in at 236. There were some different reactions, but it was really good – good learning."

Frye estimated that the 2.4-litre hybrids will arrive early next year, and said that Friday's test validated the aero changes made as IndyCar seeks to improve the racing at the Indianapolis 500.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Logano on top in NASCAR's delayed return to dirt

NASCAR CUP

Joey Logano held off Ricky Stenhouse Jr in overtime for victory at the Bristol Motor Speedway, in the NASCAR Cup Series' first dirt race in over 50 years.

The contest was delayed to Monday following rain around the Tennessee track.

Logano first picked up the lead towards the end of the second stage, as leader Daniel Suarez was pipped

with seven laps remaining before the second interval by the Penske Ford driver.

As Logano was cruising to victory, a late-race accident brought out a caution and sent the race into a two-lap overtime. JTG Daugherty's Stenhouse was Logano's main challenger over the final two laps, but the 2018 champion had little trouble holding on for his first victory of the season. Logano also became the

seventh different winner in the season's first seven races.

Denny Hamlin was third in his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota, with Suarez fourth to secure the new Trackhouse Racing team's best result since joining the Cup Series.

Hamlin remains on top of the drivers' standings, having only finished outside of the top five once all season, despite no wins.

JIM UTTER



IN THE HEADLINES

CORVETTES ONLY TO DETROIT

The two Chevrolet Corvette C8.Rs are set to race alone in the GT Le Mans class at the Detroit IMSA SportsCar Championship round, which has been pushed back a week to 11-12 June to join the IndyCar Series weekend. GTLM has been added to the Belle Isle fixture on a non-points basis after the Le Mans 24 Hours was rescheduled to August. The move means that Corvette Racing will not participate in the Algarve World Endurance Championship round the same weekend as Detroit.

TAYLOR TARGETS ELMS

Two-time Daytona 24 Hours winner Ricky Taylor will join the DragonSpeed LMP2 squad for the European Le Mans Series opener at Barcelona on 18 April. The reigning IMSA SportsCar champion will race with full-season drivers Ben Hanley and Henrik Hedman in the team's ORECA-Gibson 07 as the first of a revolving cast of star names to fill the seat.

STRONG BMW GT LINE-UP

Four factory BMW drivers have joined the Walkenhorst squad for its assault on the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup this year. Timo Glock and Martin Tomczyk will share one of the team's pair of BMW M6 GT3s with Briton David Pittard, who won the Nürburgring Long-distance Series with Walkenhorst in 2020. Marco Wittmann and Sheldon van der Linde will drive the other car with Thomas Neubauer, who raced in the GTWCE last year with the Tech 1 Lexus squad.

TESTING SLOTS FOR F3

The FIA Formula 3 Championship has announced it will stage three test sessions during the 2021 season, including an in-season test following the first round. The first test will be held at Austria's Red Bull Ring on 3-4 April, before two tests in Spain – one before and after the season's first round supporting the Spanish Grand Prix on 7-9 May.

JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

Button's team pulls out of DTM

DTM

Jenson Team Rocket RJN has backed out of its planned entry into the DTM's new GT3 era to instead focus on the GT World Challenge Europe and British GT in 2021.

The team co-owned by 2009 Formula 1 champion Jenson Button had planned to field a McLaren 720S GT3 in the revamped DTM series this year but, after what Button's partner Chris Buncombe termed "a change of plans" understood to be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit, will no longer proceed with the entry. Plans to expand to a second base in Germany to assist with the running of the team were deemed unfeasible in the current climate.

"For a British team like ours, the logistics are also challenging at the moment," said Buncombe. "Running in that series from the UK wouldn't have made sense. We were looking at options to be on the continent because sending people and equipment back and forth across the Channel sadly isn't as easy as it was. There are many factors that just made it not possible to complete

our intentions as they were a few months ago. We like the look of the championship and maybe [will] put something together for next year."

The squad will run McLaren's Driver Development Programme entry in British GT with a pair of McLaren 570S GT4s and return after a year's absence to the GT3-based GTWCE RJN won in 2015.

Meanwhile ex-F1 driver Timo Glock will extend his spell in the DTM for a ninth season, joining Sheldon van der Linde at Rowe Racing to drive the BMW M6 GT3. The 39-year-old was the top-performing BMW driver in the final season of the DTM's Class 1 regulations, placing fifth in a season dominated by Audis. Although he has been a regular in BMW's IMSA endurance line-ups in recent years with the M8 GTE, Glock has only raced the GT3-spec car once, when he was ninth in the 2018 Bathurst 12 Hour.

Glock will be joined on the grid by LMP2 regular Arjun Maini, the first Indian driver to compete in the DTM after signing a deal with Mercedes squad GetSpeed.

RACHIT THUKRAL AND SVEN HAIDINGER



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Make mistakes, get stronger

Verstappen's small but costly error in Bahrain recalled Leclerc's defeat in the 2019 Austrian GP, and, like the Monegasque, you can bet he will learn from it

ALEX KALINAUKAS

He was suddenly on the outside line. He didn't want to be, but circumstances had forced him here. Still, he had a chance to win a race he'd long led, if he got things right. The cars came close together, then, an unexpected jolt. It sent him wide over the kerbs on the exit of the right-hander. Although a few laps of the race remained, his victory hopes vanished.

Formula 1 is at its best when it's close, unpredictable and (whisper it) controversial. The stakes are even higher when wins are on the line. That's why the race ending was so enthralling.

A driver found themselves in a new situation – and they backed themselves to succeed based on their prodigious ability and successful track record. The slightest misjudgement cost them dear. But Charles Leclerc learned from his painful 2019 Austrian Grand Prix defeat to Max Verstappen, in the same way that Verstappen will no doubt become stronger after losing out in Bahrain by slipping off the road in his battle with Lewis Hamilton.

Of course, this is with the benefit of hindsight, but Verstappen's decision to fully attack Hamilton at the precise moment he did must go down as a mistake. Not a big one in the moment, but an error nevertheless, and one that cost a famous win.

Verstappen explained post-race that, despite his 11-lap tyre life advantage, which "goes away very quickly once you get within 1.5s", a lack of subsequent grip meant he couldn't just cruise back up to

"Verstappen has a proven track record of adapting his game after making mistakes"

Hamilton and attack again after his slip off the road – from snap oversteer possibly stemming from a sudden side wind – at Bahrain's Turn 4, which had been in the rulebook spotlight all weekend. With his knowledge of the tyre situation at the time, Verstappen may have felt he had to try where and when he did.

But Antonio Giovinazzi's unlikely part in a victory scrap – the Alfa was on the inside of the straight on the run up to Verstappen's move, which set the Red Bull driver on the course he took – and the corner the leaders were approaching were factors that Verstappen may consider differently if he were to have that time again. Simply put, attacking elsewhere or a lap later without the backmarker's presence may have been a better option. But we'll never know.

We do know other things – thankfully. Verstappen has a proven track record of adapting his game after making mistakes – even if

he won't admit to them, such as the string of costly errors he made in early 2018, after which he appeared to adjust his game and not put everything on the line every lap.

We also know that Leclerc toughened his battle style after his 2019 Red Bull Ring defeat, even at the very next race – where at Silverstone he took on Verstappen again and that time won out. Later that year, he triumphed in the Italian GP with a robust defence against Hamilton.

And Monza memories are important here. In 2018, Hamilton produced one of his most famous and brilliant victories against the two faster Ferraris – currently ranked second only to his 2008 British GP win by Autosport, when considering all 96 he has taken in F1 so far (and last weekend in Bahrain must now be considered for a high placing in any updated ranking from our Chief Editor! *But not ahead of the 2020 Turkish GP – ed.*)

It's worth blending that Monza display together with what Hamilton did last weekend when considering F1's 2021 season-opener. Red Bull's testing pace has transferred into the season proper and must currently be considered the benchmark.

Also, Bahrain is an outlier circuit of sorts, with its abrasive surface and windy setting – both of which will make a car that struggles with rear handling, such as the Mercedes, suffer more. But Mercedes says it also has a weakness in high-speed turns compared to Red Bull and therefore expects the layouts at Imola and Algarve to suit its rival more.

So, it seems that, right now, F1 has got the title fight many wanted – and arguably the championship overall, needed – with Verstappen and Red Bull the favourites and Hamilton and Mercedes the challengers.

That's why Monza 2018 is important – because Hamilton can make the difference in a slower car and did so again four days ago. He knows he and his team have "got to be smarter" than Red Bull and perfect in every area from now on, given that the unique circumstances of F1's technical rules in 2021 mean it will be very hard for Mercedes to develop its way out of trouble. Red Bull may also reflect, as Verstappen suggests, that it didn't "have a lot of flexibility in the strategy", and perhaps alter its weekend tyre usage given that Mercedes had an extra set of hard tyres that it deployed to its advantage in last Sunday's race.

But Austria 2019 and Verstappen's defeat last Sunday should be meshed in thoughts of the expected title fight to come. Just as Leclerc improved two years ago, Hamilton knows that Verstappen will not give away the same prize again.

"We were fortunate with Max going wide in Turn 4," concluded the world champion. "But that won't happen again." 

P32 BAHRAIN GP DRIVER RATINGS

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Entrepreneurial mindset is key

Commerce and business are traditionally associated with the word ‘entrepreneur’, but it also encapsulates a pioneering spirit that’s applicable to engineering and design

RODI BASSO

Having worked in motorsport for two decades, I've crossed paths with many great minds and innovators. I've been very close to people such as Rory Byrne and Adrian Newey at work, and you can see they never stand still, constantly searching for a winning edge or performance breakthrough.

You don't often hear people inside racing teams being referred to as entrepreneurs. That's usually reserved for those individuals running the business. But when I was approached to speak on a panel celebrating entrepreneurship at ASI Connect last month, those same engineering pioneers were exactly the names that came to my mind. Not as founders of organisations, but because they have an entrepreneurial mindset that's crucial to their success.

Engineers or mechanics might not always be the ones taking financial risks in setting up a business, but they do deal in profit, just not the way you'd think – whether it's ‘profiting’ others around you through hard work as part of a championship-winning team, or introducing upgrades that ‘profit’ from improved performance. Consumers also profit from engineering creations in motorsport through the benefits of technology transfer. Of course, I'm playing with the use of the word profit here, but hopefully you see my point.

Technology transfer and road relevance are terms often bandied around in Formula 1 and Formula E, especially given the direction in which the automotive industry is moving with electrification.

“We’re going to bring electric performance and efficiency never seen before on the water”

This technology transfer can also be mirrored with other modes of transport, whether it's on land, sea or air – as shown by Airspeeder and the E1 Series, which is a project I'm proud to be leading as co-founder and CEO.

It was fantastic to sit alongside my friend Rob Smedley at ASI Connect, to learn how Electroheads is looking to make grassroots motorsport more accessible. It was also incredibly insightful to hear from Paulo Pinheiro, the CEO of Autodromo Internacional Algarve, who envisioned the construction of the Portimao circuit and took F1 racing back to Portugal for the first time since 1996.

Rob's and Paulo's inventiveness reminded me of how the E1 Series came about. I was walking with Alejandro Agag during lockdown – socially distanced, of course – and we swapped ideas on electric mobility, specifically in the marine industry. As with Alejandro's

other motorsport ventures in Formula E and Extreme E, he was clearly ahead of the curve and truly epitomises an entrepreneur.

To me, entrepreneurship is not just about the commercial side of things. It's also about passion, purpose and creativity. That's why I chose to team up with Alejandro for the E1 Series, merging my two passions of motorsport and the sea. I love the feeling of being at one with nature when you leave the harbour and switch your engine off. Also, during my time working in motorsport, it was always my dream to use racing to gain visibility around a specific technology, then build a solution with it in other fields. This is what we can do with the E1 Series, and plug in the experience gained and lessons learned in motorsport to revolutionise marine mobility.

The mission of the E1 Series is to create an exciting and competitive racing platform and act as a testing ground for future electric watercraft. Accelerating the mass adoption of electric technologies can help to relieve the huge environmental pressures being placed on fragile underwater ecosystems and achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 14 to protect life below water.

By mixing the worlds of motorsport, motonautique and sailing, we can quickly make strides with what has been achieved in electric car championships, as well as with electric hypercars and supercars, and leverage the new directions shown in the America's Cup through the foiling architecture. Yes, the E1 Series is a completely different discipline, and it comes with challenges unique to racing on water, but we don't need to start from a blank sheet of paper.

With the E1 Series, we're going to bring electric performance and efficiency that has never been seen before on the water. By bringing an approach fuelled by success in motorsport, we aim to deliver a new racing championship in just over two years.

The foundations of electric competitions are built on sustainability. However, as FE has shown, it needs to go hand in hand with raising awareness and that also comes from creating a racing product that people can engage with. This is our goal and, with fully foiling boats ‘flying’ one metre above the water's surface, we hope to usher in a new era of powerboat racing.

Starting from the input made by SeaBird Technologies led by Sophi Horne, and working in collaboration with the marine design and engineering experts at Victory Marine Navy & Technologies lead by Brunello Acampora, we're on course to unveil the final design and first full-size RaceBird powerboat on 8 June, to coincide with World Oceans Day. Speaking with the team of engineers at Victory Marine reminds me of the same entrepreneurial spirit I experienced in top-tier international racing.

That spark and what I would class as entrepreneurial way of thinking is crucial to success at all levels of motorsport. Taking risks and learning from mistakes is the only way racing drivers, engineers and organisations achieve high performance. ■

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YOUR SAY

I have fond recall of Johnny's enthusiasm for learning about the old Crystal Palace circuit as I drove him (slowly) for a lap in my Golf GTI back in 1984

DAVID WINDSOR

Fond memories of Johnny Dumfries

Saddened to learn of Johnny Dumfries passing at so young an age (Obituary, 25 March). I have fond recall of his enthusiasm for learning about the old Crystal Palace circuit as I drove him (slowly) for a lap in my Golf GTI back in 1984.

We were attending the athletics track for a photoshoot and feature comparing 'fitness' in different professions – journalist, racing driver and cyclist – for publication in *Motor* magazine.

I won the 100-metre sprint. Mike Burrows (the guru of British cycling) won the bike race and Johnny was really gracious in defeat – twice, having already won the British F3 championship.

Rest in peace, a true gentleman.

David Windsor

By email

The stars of Bahrain

A thrilling race in Bahrain with an unexpected outcome. For me the stars were:

- Williams for their tribute to Murray Walker on the halo – 'I've got to stop, because I've got a lump in my throat'. Class. Hope they do a Williams T-shirt with this tribute.
- Yuki Tsunoda (pictured) in his first F1 race. A natural racer, with only three days' testing! Also self-critical, 50% satisfied as he made mistakes.
- Max Verstappen – the moral winner! Also for handing back the lead.
- Lewis Hamilton for winning, albeit the Mercedes strategy favoured him and he made use of the track limits loophole.
- Quality of racing for the fans, with standout drives by Lando Norris and Charles Leclerc.

Stuart Balmer

By email

Do we need gimmicks in F1?

In Bahrain we had superb F2 action. Then we had that F1 quali. Then we had *that* F1 race. And we are talking of the nonsense



of F1 Saturday sprints? Simply because Liberty thinks that will give them some additional monetisable content, rather than actually adding to that which is F1?

Graeme Innes-Johnstone

Elland, West Yorks

Reminder of another era

That poster (of the 1972 South African GP) in *Autosport* (25 March) is so beautiful, it's worth framing and hanging on the wall. All the cars you recognise from their shape and colours. Also, the numbers give direct indication of who is who.

So please Mr Ross Brawn, give the teams more room and freedom to design cars that look different to each other. Your car in 2009 was so very different from the others – and you won. All the cars' front-wing construction in that year looked different. Today I don't see any real difference if I look at the front wings.

And please, because I am sure I talk for many, many TV viewers, we need to see the driver's name and number on the halo so we can see who it is.

Robert Potharst

By email

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HAMILTON HOLDS OFF RESURGENT RED BULL

Max Verstappen had the fastest car in Bahrain, but the world champion and Mercedes found a way to win the first bout of 2021

ALEX KALINAUKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

STAT
6

It is the first time in six years that Hamilton has won the season-opener



SUTTON

G

iven the astounding levels of success Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes have achieved in the past seven Formula 1 seasons, it's somewhat surprising that their latest Bahrain Grand Prix victory – and Hamilton's 96th F1 win – was something of an underdog tale.

Mercedes had ended pre-season testing seemingly well adrift of Red Bull on pure pace and with poor car balance. When the teams arrived back in Bahrain for the race, most of the obscured elements from the testing picture would be revealed. And Max Verstappen's near 0.4-second pole margin over Hamilton confirmed that Red Bull was indeed the team to beat.

The race's two main protagonists provided excellent foreshadowing of the battle to come when they eventually took the race start – each pointed slightly towards the other, anticipating an immediate challenge on the run to the race's first corner. The start moment had been delayed by a lap after Sergio Perez had pulled the second Red Bull over on the initial formation lap after it "lost all its electrical power", according to Red Bull chief engineer Paul Monaghan. Verstappen led the pack around (the race length now reduced to 56 laps) while Perez, who had come "close to jumping out", took his steering wheel on and off, which coaxed the car back into life and allowed him to take the start from the pits.

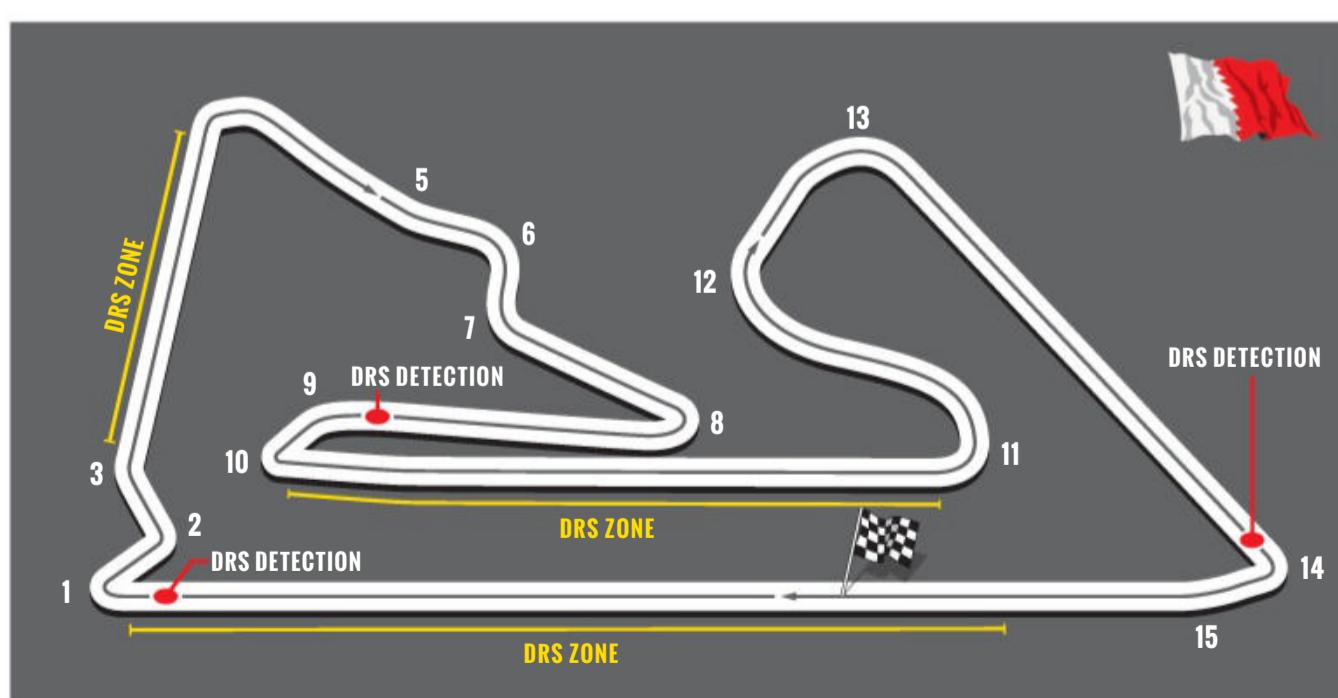
From Perez's vantage point, a glimpse of the lead action flashed by. Verstappen and Hamilton got away in unison, with the Dutchman quickly moving to cover the inside line approaching Turn 1. Hamilton fell in behind Verstappen after the opening corners, with Valtteri Bottas then succumbing to pressure from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc as they raced out of the Turn 4 wide right-hander – the Finn having made a slightly slower getaway from third.

But the race was soon neutralised thanks to Nikita Mazepin dropping his Haas on cold tyres after running onto the Turn 2 exit kerbs and spearing into the wall on the outside. The safety car appeared, which meant Verstappen again had to defend the inside line to Turn 1 when the race restarted on lap four. It was a harder job this time as the headwind down the main straight would leave him vulnerable to attack on the longer run, even with the Honda power unit seemingly now having an edge against Mercedes. Verstappen therefore only powered back to top speed after reaching the finish line, and that, allied to his call to quickly get close to the pitwall, was enough to maintain the lead.

The race was briefly suspended again – this time via the virtual safety car – after Mick Schumacher's own self-inflicted spin, Pierre Gasly knocking his front wing off against Daniel Ricciardo's left-rear tyre, and Carlos Sainz Jr clashing with Lance Stroll at the tight Turn 10 apex that leads on to the track's back straight. Normal service ➤



BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT





resumed with the leaders one-third into lap five.

Soon Mercedes had a decision to make. The resulting call, and the series of subsequent choices that followed (plus one from before the race), decided how F1's 2021 season-opener finished.

MERCEDES GOES AGGRESSIVE WITH HAMILTON'S STRATEGY

Perez's poor qualifying meant Red Bull only had one card to play in the lead fight even before the electrical gremlin had struck, but Mercedes had initially lost its two-car strategy advantage thanks to Bottas falling behind Leclerc. He battled back to third with a DRS blast at the start of lap six, but by the end of that lap he was 4.6s behind Verstappen.

The race leader had pulled clear of DRS threat by lap five's end, and while he continued to edge away from Hamilton, the gap had only grown to a maximum of 1.8s by the start of lap 12. At the end of the next tour, the world champion came in. Considering he, like Verstappen, had started on the medium tyre, this was a very early, and bold, move. The optimum two-stop medium-starting strategy supposedly involved staying out until lap 18, but Mercedes sensed an opportunity by coming in early.

"Our hope going into the race was that we'd be able to put Max under a bit of pressure," explained Mercedes' trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin. "Lewis did that brilliantly and was able to stay within undercut range."

Hamilton's out-lap pace meant he was quickly in the position to jump Verstappen even if Red Bull called him in immediately. But Christian Horner later explained that the strategy was "very much fixed" on a conventional two-stopper. Considering how things played out, by continuing until the end of lap 17, Red Bull effectively maintained strategic impetus via the tyre off-set, even if it conceded track position and gave Hamilton a 6.6s lead when the pitstops had shaken themselves out by lap 19.

Verstappen's pace over the next nine laps demonstrated Red Bull's pace advantage on the day, as he closed at a rate of 0.505s per lap.

But there were other factors at play too – as Shovlin explained, Hamilton had "pushed pretty hard at the start of that second stint", and his pace therefore began to drop again, after he had seemingly stemmed the worst of the time loss between laps 23 and 25 (where Verstappen was only 0.097s faster on average). But after the pace between the leaders opened up again, Verstappen was soon within range of being able to attack Hamilton with his own undercut.

To defend this, Mercedes actually had to go aggressive again – albeit this time with a potential major advantage. Mercedes brought Hamilton in on lap 28, believing it might be able to force Red Bull to bring Verstappen in sooner than it would ideally want in order to avoid being undercut by Bottas. Although the second Black Arrows was 5.4s behind at the start of lap 29, such was the fresh rubber advantage that Verstappen would have had to pass both Bottas and Hamilton to win the race, even with a big tyre offset. Mercedes essentially tried to bait Red Bull into giving up the offset advantage by not giving Bottas a different strategy to Hamilton – which he later called "defensive instead of attacking, which I'm quite surprised by and it's not quite normal".

But, in any case, this plan was blown. The right-front wheel did not initially connect with the wheelnut as intended, which meant Bottas's stop lasted 10.9s and the chance to apply the undercut was gone.





RED BULL'S PRE-RACE TYRE USAGE GETS QUESTIONED

While Mercedes was trying to lure Red Bull off its pre-race plan, another decision made earlier in the weekend was working against Verstappen. He had come into the race with only one set of the hard tyres available, to the two for both Mercedes drivers. This left him at a slight disadvantage, as Pirelli explained the medium compound he'd stayed on at his first stop had "a slightly reduced performance gap" compared to the white-walled alternatives (the soft was never an option given its fragile nature on Bahrain's abrasive track surface).

Essentially, had Verstappen been able to run the hard tyres during his second stint, he may well have been able to produce faster laps and done so for longer when Hamilton came in early as part of Mercedes' ploy to get all the leading cars on pretty much the same length final stint (or considering a three-stopper). And it was the length of the final stint that ultimately led to the end result.

"We didn't really have a lot of flexibility in the strategy," Verstappen later reflected. "So maybe also there we could have done better in choosing our tyres throughout practice."

HAMILTON'S FINAL STINT DRIVING CHOICES BECOME PIVOTAL

"It's not my first rodeo," Hamilton would say of his final stint performance, where he had to nurse his last set of hards over 28 laps, knowing that pushing too hard would mean Verstappen would get by easier when it came to the endgame. At the same time, as Shovlin explained, he couldn't "give the tyres too easy a time because then you haven't got enough of a gap".

This phase of the race was classic Hamilton. He questioned Mercedes' decision to bring him in with half the race to do as the final stint and told race engineer Peter Bonnington that a desired low 1m34s lap time average would mean he'd risk not having enough performance come the inevitable battle. Mercedes soon left things to Hamilton's tyre management judgement – one of his greatest strengths. >>



Even after Max Verstappen had topped all three practice sessions, an air of inevitability remained. Mercedes had never been defeated in a season-opening qualifying session in the turbo hybrid era, and, thanks to the single engine mode rules not applying until qualifying, it remained possible that the Black Arrows would rescue its record.

Trepidation increased in Q1 when Verstappen, who topped the segment, urgently asked his team to check his floor for possible damage after clattering the Turn 2 exit kerbs. Replays revealed pieces of carbon-fibre flying off the RB16B on the following straight and the team reckoned the damage cost him a tenth of a second per lap thereafter.

Mercedes had its opening and Lewis Hamilton duly drove right through it in Q2, ending up four places ahead of Verstappen. But F1's Q2 starting tyre rules distort the picture, as several drivers – including the eventual qualifying top three – attempted to get through on the medium tyres. Sergio Perez and Yuki Tsunoda could not do enough, the latter blaming a "completely strange" feeling on the harder rubber for his fall from a remarkable Q1 P2 to a P13 grid spot.

But with the switch back to softs in Q3 came Verstappen's moment and post-2013 era F1 history. After Hamilton had taken provisional pole with a 1m29.549s first run, he edged 0.023s ahead. On the second run, Verstappen was emphatic, sweeping all three sectors for a fourth F1 pole by 0.388s.

Explaining the difference between the two Q3 laps,

Verstappen said: "I just had a few corners where I had a bit of loss of grip and then you run too wide and have less traction [on the first lap]. It's just tidying those things up – and that helped a lot. This track is super-sensitive to how the tyres behave anyway – like you can gain or lose a lot of lap time, especially when the wind is in the direction it was [a main straight headwind]."

Behind Verstappen, Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas came a charging Charles Leclerc, who only had one Q3 run due to a lack of new soft rubber. Pierre Gasly was an excellent fifth, while Fernando Alonso marked his F1 return with his highest grid spot (ninth) since the 2018 Monaco Grand Prix.

George Russell escaped Q1 for the 10th time since the start of 2020, sacrificing new rubber for Q2 by doing an aborted run to fully understand the wind conditions at the start of qualifying because of his car's vulnerability to gusts.

ALEX KALINAUKAS

"I HAD A BIT OF LOSS OF GRIP, THEN YOU RUN TOO WIDE AND HAVE LESS TRACTION"

"Given the car that we have in terms of looking after the tyres, and we'd stopped short and the second one even shorter, I was thinking, 'Jeez, there's just no way we're going to be able to pull this off, with these tyres dropping off' – particularly in the last 10-15 laps," Hamilton explained.

"I was trying to find the right balance: not taking too much out of the tyres but not doing the same times as [Verstappen, still in the lead with a stop to make]. I just tried to remain positive and try to be just as inch-perfect as I possibly could."

TURN 4 TRACK LIMITS ENFORCEMENT BECOMES THE FOCUS

While Hamilton was putting in yet another tyre management masterclass, one element of what he was doing was being questioned off track.

Testing talk about track limits violations at Turn 4 had become incredibly tedious given the lack of sporting competition, but the issue was rightly in the spotlight last weekend. The FIA had initially decided the corner's outside would not be monitored in regards to setting a lap time, but after FP1 it was decided that for the rest of practice and qualifying any driver going behind the kerbs would lose that lap.

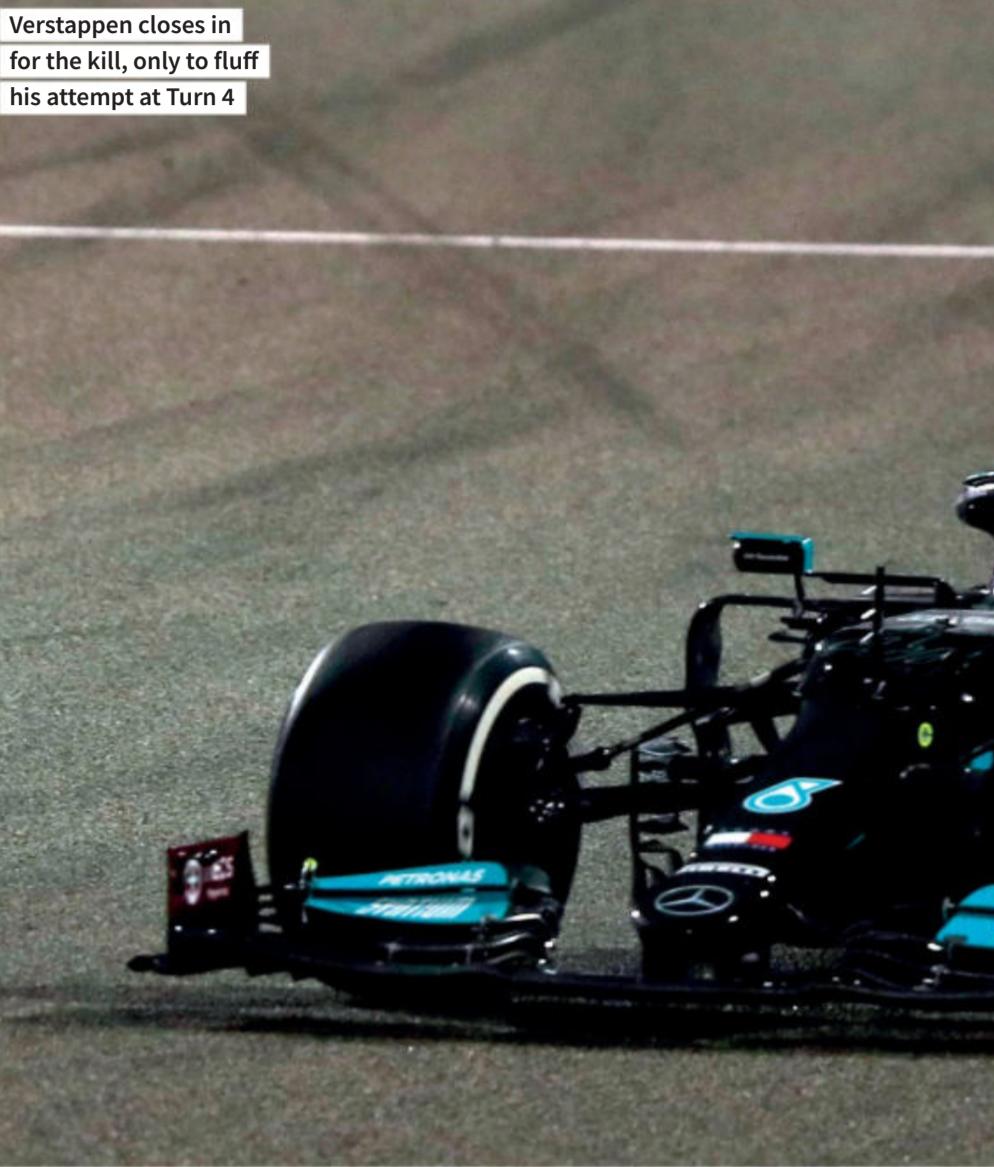
Crucially, for the race the situation returned to not being "monitored with regard to setting a lap time, as the defining limits are the artificial grass and the gravel trap in that location," according to race director Michael Masi's briefing notes. At the same time, Article 27.3 of F1's sporting rules would apply – which meant drivers couldn't earn a lasting advantage by leaving the track.

In the laps following his final pitstop, Hamilton had been regularly running beyond the kerbs exiting Turn 4 – and it appears, per Masi's instructions, that this was only allowed if an advantage was not being gained. So Red Bull queried the situation.

"We could see that as soon as Mercedes started to push, they just used that part of the track," said Horner. "And we questioned with race control: 'If that's the case, can we do it?' Because when you're in that nip and tuck battle, there's a two-tenth advantage using that part of the circuit, so they did it lap after lap. The race director then asked them to respect the limits, otherwise they'd get a black and white flag."

Toto Wolff said his squad saw things this way: "At the beginning of the race it was said track limits in Turn 4 wouldn't be sanctioned. And then in the race suddenly we heard that if you would continue to run wide it would be seen as an advantage and could cause a potential penalty. Which we debated with the race director, but there's nothing we could have done."

It appears that Masi's later clarification that "nothing changed during the race, nothing changed at all" stands up (Hamilton stated "they basically changed their minds" mid-race), because running wide at Turn 4 was allowed as long as advantage wasn't established. Based on reading Masi's notes, F1's sporting rules and Horner's explanation, it seems at the time of writing that when Red Bull made the case that Hamilton was gaining by running wide, Masi instructed Mercedes to warn him off. All very confusing, all very crucial to the race result.



COATES

VERSTAPPEN'S POINT OF ATTACK LEFT HIM VULNERABLE

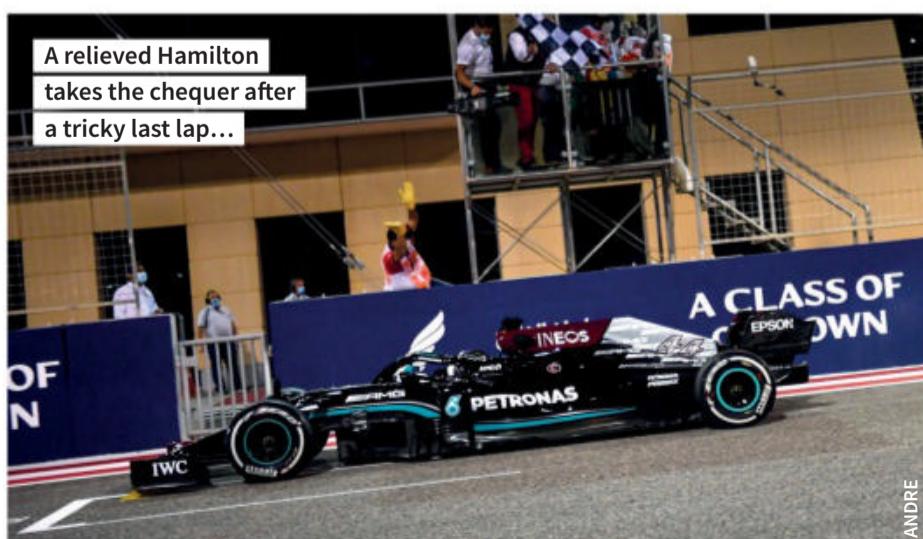
Hamilton was annoyed by the lap 37 instruction to revert to the Turn 4 qualifying line, but would later say the decision "helped me look after my tyres actually, so I'm grateful for the call".

By this stage, Verstappen's middle stint was nearly over, and he eventually came in at the end of lap 39, setting up a 16-lap chase to the flag. From the end of lap 40, Verstappen had to close a 7.6s gap, which he did at a rate of 0.591s per lap against Hamilton over the next 12 tours – the pair now back on the same rubber, the hards.

Verstappen's initial pace was scorching, his first four flying laps were low-mid 1m33s versus Hamilton's mid-low 1m34s. Although he then reined it in, he was still gaining significantly each lap, mainly in the middle sector where the Red Bull's car advantage was greatest.

He got to 0.8s adrift and within DRS range at the end of lap 51, the tour on which Hamilton locked up heavily and went off at the exit of the double left Turns 9/10 complex. The next time by it was 0.5s and then the race's pivotal moment occurred.

As Hamilton ran behind Antonio Giovinazzi's Alfa Romeo on the short straight to Turn 4, Verstappen made his move – having been



A relieved Hamilton takes the chequer after a tricky last lap...



... as Toto Wolff and his staff let rip in the garage



warded off a Turn 1 lunge by Hamilton's careful car positioning on the main straight. With Giovinazzi slowing on the inside, the outside was Verstappen's only choice, but he had the momentum to stay ahead. The trouble was, he'd slipped too wide and gone beyond the contentious Turn 4 exit kerbs.

No pass was going to be easy considering the Red Bull was best in the technical middle sector and the wind was hampering Verstappen's grip in slow corners, crucial for pulling close on traction to make a move – plus he had to drive around a suspected differential problem that Horner said "seemed to compromise his first sector compared to the Mercedes". But given how the few remaining miles unfolded, Verstappen may have been better off waiting to make the attack elsewhere, or at least once there was no traffic involved.

HOW VERSTAPPEN'S SPORTSMANSHIP SHAPED THE FINAL LAPS

Hamilton immediately radioed in that Verstappen completed the overtake beyond the track limits and Red Bull's shouts of triumph quickly became an order to cede the position back, as Masi stuck to his pre-race word to "go on the radio and suggest to the team that they immediately relinquish that position". Verstappen pulled over on the back straight and let Hamilton by without comment, but later radioed Red Bull to ask: "Why didn't you let me go? I could have easily got the five seconds. I prefer to lose like that than to be second like this."

But such a move would not necessarily have won the race, because overtaking off-track is not a fixed five-second penalty, and the stewards would have considered that Verstappen had ignored Masi's suggestion. Simply put, he might have been hit with a greater penalty than any likely advantage he'd have gained.

Still, ceding the position where he did cost Verstappen another chance to win the grand prix. The tyre life he'd used to close in and get ahead had been wasted, and he lost crucial momentum catching a big snap of oversteer at Turn 13 on the same lap as his botched pass. From there, although Verstappen closed back in on Hamilton, he never got another chance.

Still got it. But it was hard work getting his hands on this trophy



"I just didn't have the tyres any more to attack," Verstappen explained. "Of course, my tyres were younger, but with these cars, that advantage goes away very quickly once you get within 1.5s and with the wind in the direction it was, it was not helping. With these cars, the last three years, it is very important to have track position and we gave that up today."

Hamilton counted three moments on the final tour that he thought would still cost him the win – "oversteer out of Turn 10, nervousness out of 11, snap oversteer in 13, which is a really bad one" – but he held on. His victory margin was 0.7s, with Bottas claiming third 37.3s adrift after a stop two laps from home for fresh tyres, to successfully claim the fastest lap bonus point on the final tour.

"I've still got it," Hamilton told his jubilant team after the flag. And that is one of two key takeaways from a thrilling season-opener. The world champion can still make the difference in a slower car, but Red Bull's title potential is clear. ■

NEXT F1 REPORT

EMILIA ROMAGNA GRAND PRIX 22 APRIL ISSUE

Can Verstappen and Red Bull take revenge on Hamilton and Mercedes after their defeat in round one? Find out at Imola.



MAUGER

Norris leads another strong result for McLaren

McLaren's weekend in Bahrain was, with all four of the frontrunning cars finishing, the best it could do.

Lando Norris had fourth place locked down tightly from the early stages, having overcome Pierre Gasly at the restart and later diving past Charles Leclerc, en route to an impressive result.

Norris, crucially, had leapfrogged Daniel Ricciardo before the first-lap safety car came into play, setting him up to cement his position as the 'best of the rest' and keeping enough of an advantage over Leclerc's Ferrari to ensure that the chasing Red Bull of Sergio Perez ran out of time to eat away at his gap.

Having been outqualified by Ricciardo, Norris spent the evening poring over the data to find a little extra over his new team-mate – and pulled off a sterling race with aplomb.

Ricciardo enjoyed a solid but unspectacular first race with McLaren to finish seventh, having kept the battle between Carlos Sainz Jr and Lance Stroll at arm's length, but he didn't quite have enough to challenge Leclerc by the end.

The Australian was a little lucky to sustain no damage after Gasly clipped his rear in the AlphaTauri at the restart running through the high-speed Turn 6 right, which caused the Frenchman's wing to break and sent him plummeting down the order. Floor damage picked up going off here hurt Gasly's pace and a late gearbox issue caused his withdrawal.



SUTTON

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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IMAGES

Perez recovers to salvage fifth

Sergio Perez's Bahrain race dramas began before his eventful formation lap, with his RB16B developing a "small electrical fault" ahead of the race, according to Red Bull chief engineer Paul Monaghan.

The team had also changed his control electronics and energy store pre-race, and it is unclear if this was related to his later issue, where his car simply switched off as he rounded the Turn 12 right on formation tour. "There was a cut-out on the car which protects it," explained Monaghan.

Perez had no drive, so coasted down the hill out of Turn 13 before eventually pulling over and waving the rest of the pack by. The Mexican removed his steering wheel and then replaced it ("Like your laptop's gone wrong, switch it off and switch it on again," said Monaghan). This seemed to coax something back to life in the car, although Autosport notes the dash really lit up just after he'd appeared to slam the wheel in understandable frustration! Red Bull was back in radio contact at this point and

Perez was able to stop the marshals pushing his car off the circuit and return to the pitlane to take the start for his Red Bull debut.

"As is often the case with these sorts of intermittent faults," said Monaghan, "the car then runs faultlessly for the race."

Aided by the safety car meaning he could switch to another set of used mediums without issue, he put in a classic Perez performance from there, running longer compared to the first stints of all bar Sebastian Vettel in what was the Red Bull's second stint. His mid-race pace on the hard tyres was impressive and he steadily climbed the order from there to rescue 10 points with fifth. His bold pass, albeit with a major car advantage, on Daniel Ricciardo was the highlight.

"I didn't maximise [qualifying, where Perez was a shock Q2 faller trying to get into Q3 on the mediums], but in the race things are starting to click a bit more, lap by lap," he reflected. "The most important thing was those kilometres that I managed to get under my belt."

"I'M NOT AT HOME IN THE CAR"

...was Sebastian Vettel's post-race verdict on his Aston Martin debut weekend, where two penalties – for not abandoning his Q1 lap after going through a double-waved yellows zone and spinning Esteban Ocon in the race – meant he picked up five penalty points.



DUNBAR

Tsunoda stars on F1 debut

Yuki Tsunoda's impressive start to life in Formula 1 continued, as he scored two points on his race debut after being a shock Q2 knockout.

Tsunoda was second-fastest in Q1 but his attempt to make it into Q2 on the mediums failed and he started 13th. He also lost two positions off the line to wheelspin.

From there though, Tsunoda put in a strong drive to rise back up the order, with a series of passes aiding his cause. He said his lap 26

move on Fernando Alonso was "a little bit emotional" after watching the Spaniard as a child fan at Fuji "12-13 years ago".

AlphaTauri was pleased he achieved its target of a clean first lap – the flatspot incurred avoiding Esteban Ocon at the Turn 8 hairpin aside – and was wowed by his passing. When discussing his successful last-lap lunge against Lance Stroll to net ninth, Tsunoda said: "I decided that if I couldn't overtake him, I can't sleep all night!"



COATES



SUTTON

Ferrari lifted by Leclerc as Sainz survives clash

Charles Leclerc confounded expectations with an exquisite run to fourth in qualifying before finishing sixth in the Bahrain Grand Prix.

The Monegasque driver found something extra in his Ferrari SF21 which, although improved over last year's car, is still missing a few tenths to truly draw clear of the midfield pack.

But Leclerc dispatched Valtteri Bottas on lap one to grab an early third, although he was unable to resist the Mercedes' advances on the restart and eventually found himself being dispatched by Lando Norris too. After the first round of pitstops, Leclerc managed to stay ahead of Daniel Ricciardo by overcutting and held fifth throughout the middle stages of the race, only succumbing to Sergio Perez's much faster Red Bull in the final few laps.

Carlos Sainz Jr enjoyed a solid run to eighth, albeit tangling with Lance Stroll early on at Turn 10 with a slightly clumsy move, and spent most of his race battling with the Aston Martin driver before making the pass stick on lap 46 of 56. Sainz admitted he was "a bit lost" in the opening stages, but soon settled down, as he experienced the Ferrari in race trim for the first time.

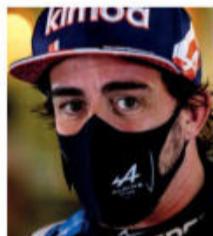
Q & A

FERNANDO ALONSO ALPINE DRIVER

How are you feeling after your F1 race return?

It was a shame that we could not see the chequered flag because I really enjoyed the whole thing. It was nice to be back racing and it was nice to feel the adrenaline again on the starting grid, the national anthem. All these procedures felt very emotional today for me.

The race itself was fun at the beginning with the start and a couple of good battles on track in the first stint. Unfortunately, we had to retire the car with



a brake issue. It is still under investigation but apparently there was some debris in the rear brake duct [Alpine later said this was a sandwich

wrapper] and there is nothing we can do now other than think towards Imola and hopefully we can get some points there.

Did you get the race data you wanted after qualifying?

It was definitely good and interesting to finally drive with some cars around in the same conditions because until then we'd met [only] a few cars in testing but at different moments of your programme. So it was definitely good.

How do you rate your race performance?

I was not at 100% – I'm sure of that. It was nice, I had a couple of good battles. Some of those had happy endings, some of them were not, as we were being overtaken, but I need to find more pace from myself and find more confidence. I need to extract more from the car, the brakes and execute the start better. It was not too bad but there is a lot of room to improve from my side. At the pitstops, I think the guys did an amazing job but my position in the second stop was not right. These are small things and mistakes I keep doing from testing. This [was just the] first race but hopefully race two and three I can perform better.

GRAND PRIX GUIDE



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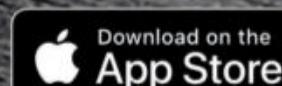
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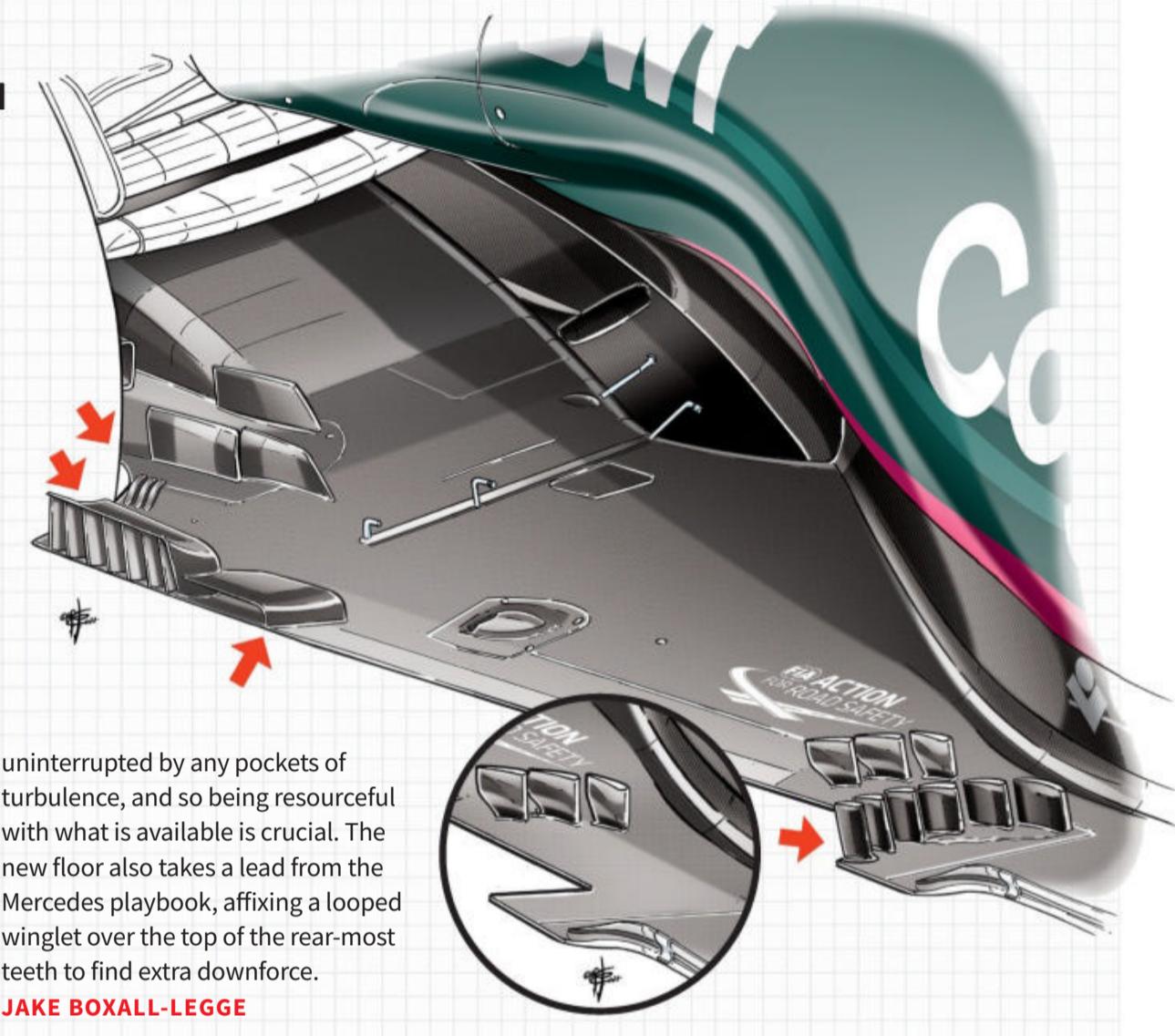
GIORGIO PIOLA

LOW RAKE SOURCE OF ASTON MARTIN DISADVANTAGE

Aston Martin principal Otmar Szafnauer was not a particularly gleeful bunny after qualifying in Bahrain. Formula 1's new-for-2021 floors, he says, have robbed the lower-rake cars of about a second in terms of performance, culminating in Mercedes' slight step backwards and Aston Martin's disappointing opening weekend.

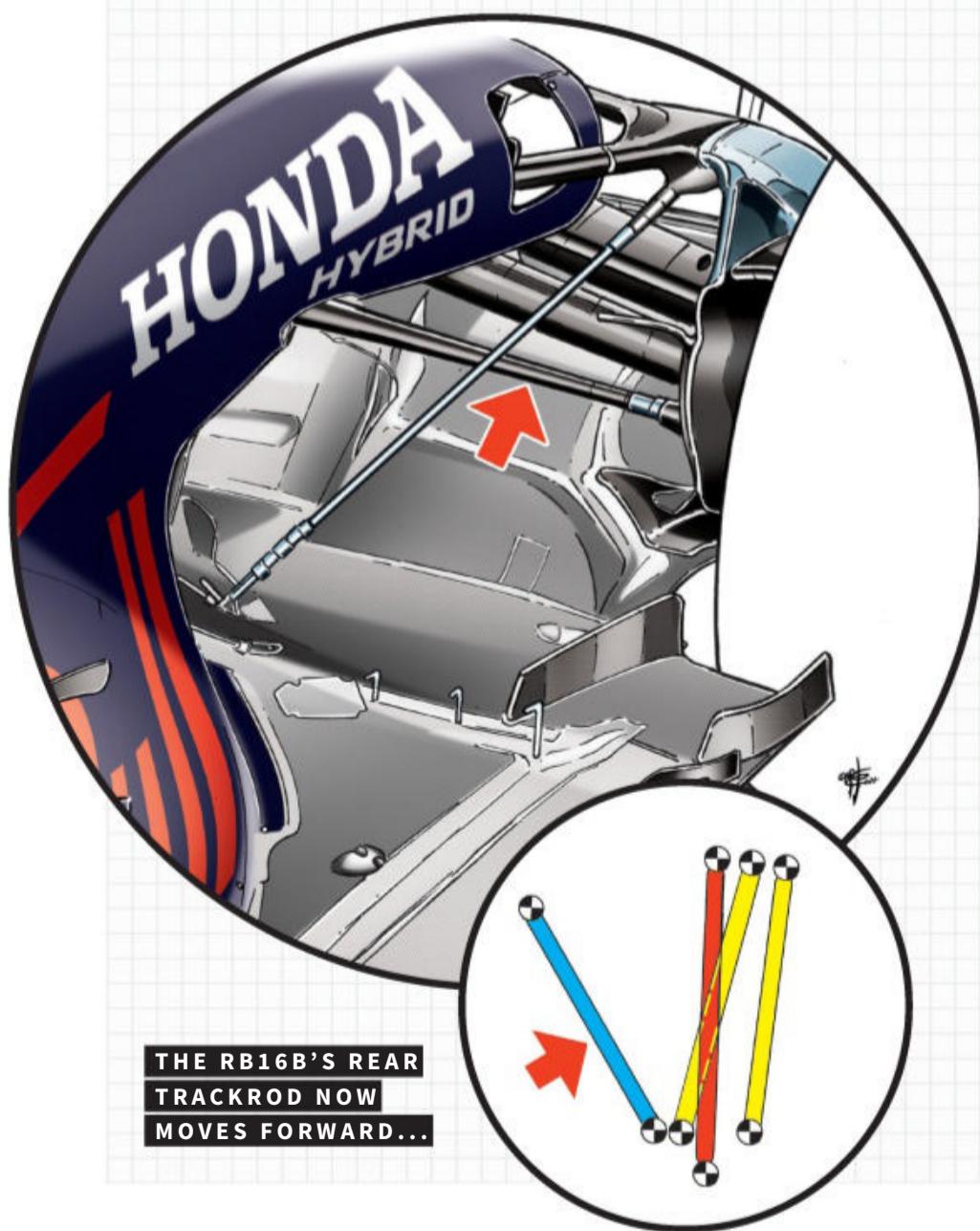
The floor changes, featuring a big triangular cut-out ahead of the rear wheels, and their effect is a bitter pill that Mercedes and Aston Martin will have to swallow – to Szafnauer's discontent as the ex-Racing Point outfit looks less potent in the ever-close midfield melee. That said, Aston Martin did arrive in Bahrain with a significantly more toothy floor design, having glued on an extra bank of fins to the right-angled cut-out midway along the floor's edge. This will give the team the tools to push airflow outboard, and further use the square edge to generate a tip vortex to help seal the floor.

The loss of the cuts and slots in the floor has given Aston Martin less to play with in ensuring that the airflow under the car remains clean and



uninterrupted by any pockets of turbulence, and so being resourceful with what is available is crucial. The new floor also takes a lead from the Mercedes playbook, affixing a looped winglet over the top of the rear-most teeth to find extra downforce.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



THE RB16B'S REAR TRACKROD NOW MOVES FORWARD...

RED BULL SUSPENSION ADDS TO SUSPENSE

The emergence of Red Bull as a genuine threat to the 2021 F1 season ensured a proper showdown between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen. Although the floor regulations have not hurt the high-rake Red Bull as much as the Mercedes, the team has also put a lot of resource into making the rear of the car more stable. It seems that Red Bull spent its two allotted development tokens on the rear suspension of the RB16B, aiming to dial in some extra predictability to the rear end. Thus, it has introduced an innovative multilink rear suspension to give the aero a further boost and ensure the rear was less temperamental than last year's RB16.

The old lower wishbone was conventional (yellow), with a track rod at the rear (blue), but now the track rod has been moved to the front and the wishbone components have been split and assume the positions that the rear

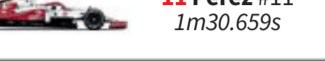
pair of components did before (the driveshafts, red, remain the same). This continues Red Bull's pursuit of using the suspension components for aero purposes, and the team has lifted these as high as possible to help the diffuser and other associated aerodynamic parts at the rear.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



...HAVING BEEN AT THE BACK OF THE RB16'S REAR SUSPENSION

RACE CENTRE BAHRAIN GP

20 Vettel #5 1m32.056s		18 Schumacher #47 1m32.449s		16 Ocon #31 1m31.724s		14 Raikkonen #7 1m31.238s		12 Giovinazzi #99 1m30.708s	
19 Mazepin #9 1m33.273s		17 Latifi #6 1m31.936s		15 Russell #63 1m33.430s		13 Tsunoda #22 1m31.203s		11 Perez #11 1m30.659s	

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m31.394s
2	Bottas	1m31.692s
3	Norris	1m31.897s
4	Hamilton	1m31.921s
5	Leclerc	1m31.993s
6	Perez	1m32.071s
7	Gasly	1m32.195s
8	Sainz	1m32.366s
9	Ricciardo	1m32.434s
10	Giovinazzi	1m32.786s
11	Raikkonen	1m33.134s
12	Vettel	1m33.157s
13	Stroll	1m33.233s
14	Tsunoda	1m33.329s
15	Ocon	1m33.528s
16	Alonso	1m33.872s
17	Russell	1m34.127s
18	Latifi	1m34.340s
19	Schumacher	1m34.501s
20	Mazepin	1m34.975s

WEATHER Sunny, air 32-36C track 44-48C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m30.847s
2	Norris	1m30.942s
3	Hamilton	1m31.082s
4	Sainz	1m31.127s
5	Bottas	1m31.218s
6	Ricciardo	1m31.230s
7	Tsunoda	1m31.294s
8	Stroll	1m31.393s
9	Gasly	1m31.483s
10	Perez	1m31.503s
11	Ocon	1m31.601s
12	Leclerc	1m31.612s
13	Giovinazzi	1m31.740s
14	Vettel	1m31.769s
15	Alonso	1m31.770s
16	Raikkonen	1m31.862s
17	Russell	1m32.331s
18	Schumacher	1m33.297s
19	Latifi	1m33.400s
20	Mazepin	1m33.449s

WEATHER Twilight, air 28-29C track 31-33C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m30.577s
2	Hamilton	1m31.316s
3	Gasly	1m31.583s
4	Bottas	1m31.855s
5	Perez	1m31.908s
6	Sainz	1m32.108s
7	Raikkonen	1m32.224s
8	Ocon	1m32.423s
9	Stroll	1m32.431s
10	Ricciardo	1m32.477s
11	Leclerc	1m32.482s
12	Giovinazzi	1m32.500s
13	Tsunoda	1m32.709s
14	Vettel	1m32.755s
15	Alonso	1m32.820s
16	Norris	1m32.860s
17	Russell	1m33.323s
18	Schumacher	1m33.422s
19	Mazepin	1m33.622s
20	Latifi	1m33.959s

WEATHER Windy, air 38-39C track 45-48C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Hamilton	25	1	2
2 Verstappen	18	2	1
3 Bottas	16	3	3
4 Norris	12	4	7
5 Perez	10	5	11
6 Leclerc	8	6	4
7 Ricciardo	6	7	6
8 Sainz	4	8	8
9 Tsunoda	2	9	13
10 Stroll	1	10	10
11 Raikkonen	0	11	14
12 Giovinazzi	0	12	12
13 Ocon	0	13	16
14 Russell	0	14	15
15 Vettel	0	15	18
16 Schumacher	0	16	19
17 Gasly	0	17	5
18 Latifi	0	18	17
19 Alonso	0	-	9
20 Mazepin	0	-	20

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Mercedes	41
2 Red Bull	28
3 McLaren	18
4 Ferrari	12
5 AlphaTauri	2
6 Aston Martin	1
7 Alfa Romeo	0
8 Alpine	0
9 Williams	0
10 Haas	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	1	0	Bottas
Perez	0	1	Verstappen
Ricciardo	1	0	Norris
Vettel	0	1	Stroll
Alonso	1	0	Ocon
Leclerc	1	0	Sainz
Gasly	1	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	0	1	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	0	1	Schumacher
Latifi	0	1	Russell

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	1
Perez	1

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	1
Bottas	1

FASTEAST LAPS

Bottas	1
Gasly	1

QUALIFYING 1		QUALIFYING 2		QUALIFYING 3	
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m30.499s	1	Sainz	1m30.009s
2	Tsunoda	1m30.607s	2	Leclerc	1m30.010s
3	Hamilton	1m30.617s	3	Hamilton	1m30.085s
4	Leclerc	1m30.691s	4	Norris	1m30.099s
5	Ricciardo	1m30.795s	5	Bottas	1m30.186s
6	Gasly	1m30.848s	6	Ricciardo	1m30.222s
7	Alonso	1m30.863s	7	Verstappen	1m30.318s
8	Norris	1m30.902s	8	Gasly	1m30.513s
9	Giovinazzi	1m30.998s	9	Alonso	1m30.595



RACE RESULTS ROUND 1/23 (56 LAPS - 188.18 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h32m03.897s	27	Mu, Hn, Hn	1	Bottas	1m32.090s	-	56
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+0.745s	29	Mu, Mn, Hn	2	Verstappen	1m33.228s	+1.138s	41
3	Valterri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+37.383s		Mu, Hn, Hn, Mu	3	Perez	1m33.970s	+1.880s	44
4	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+46.466s		Su, Mn, Hn	4	Hamilton	1m34.015s	+1.925s	44
5	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+52.047s		Mu, Mu, Hn, Mu	5	Gasly	1m34.090s	+2.000s	48
6	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+59.090s		Su, Mn, Hn	6	Norris	1m34.396s	+2.306s	38
7	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m06.004s		Su, Mn, Hn	7	Sainz	1m34.509s	+2.419s	48
8	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+1m07.100s		Su, Mn, Hn	8	Tsunoda	1m34.761s	+2.671s	38
9	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+1m25.692s		Mu, Hn, Hn	9	Stroll	1m34.865s	+2.775s	31
10	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m26.713s		Su, Mn, Hn	10	Ricciardo	1m34.932s	+2.842s	36
11	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m28.864s		Mn, Hn, Mn	11	Leclerc	1m34.988s	+2.898s	39
12	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hn, Mn	12	Russell	1m35.036s	+2.946s	40
13	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap		Sn, Mn, Hn	13	Giovinazzi	1m35.122s	+3.032s	32
14	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		Sn, Mn, Mn	14	Raikkonen	1m35.192s	+3.102s	45
15	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap		Mn, Hn	15	Ocon	1m35.250s	+3.160s	33
16	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Mn, Hn	16	Vettel	1m35.566s	+3.476s	26
17	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-4 laps		Mu, Hn, Mu, Hn	17	Alonso	1m36.063s	+3.973s	31
18	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-5 laps		Sn, Mn, Mn	18	Schumacher	1m36.134s	+4.044s	38
R	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	32 laps-brakes		Su, Mn, Hn	19	Latifi	1m36.602s	+4.512s	16
R	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	0 laps-accident		Mn	20	Mazepin	no time	-	-

WEATHER Night, and gusty, air 21°C track 26-29°C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 122.64mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 131.47mph

TYRES



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

VETTEL Five-place penalty and three licence points for failing to respect double yellow flags

RACE PENALTIES

VETTEL 10-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Ocon

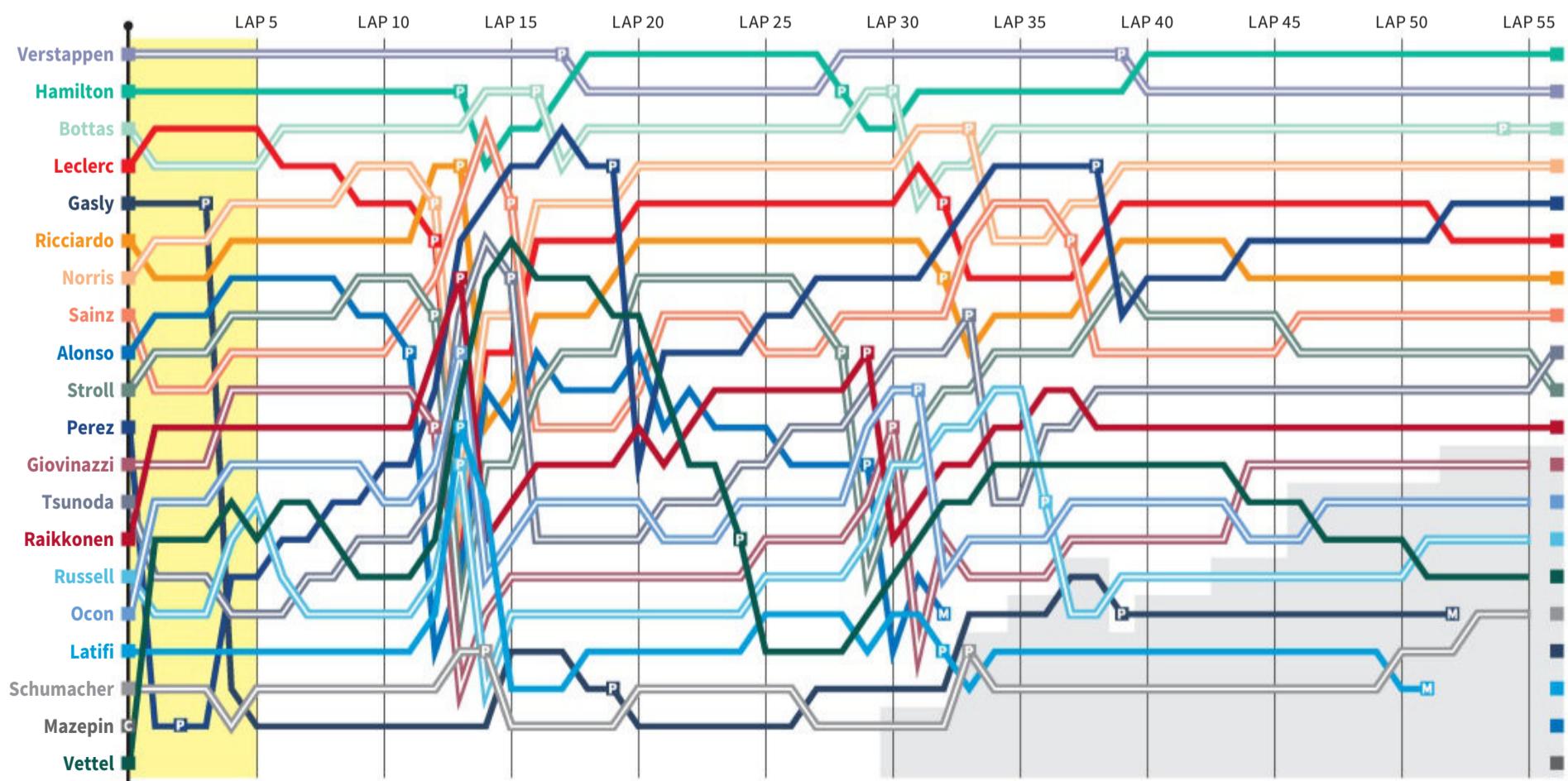
STAT

4

Verstappen has now started from pole four times in F1, matching 1958 world champion Mike Hawthorn

LAP CHART

What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin L+ Penalty L Car lapped S Safety car

HIGH SCORES FOR THE FRONT DUO BUT LECLERC TOPS THE PACK

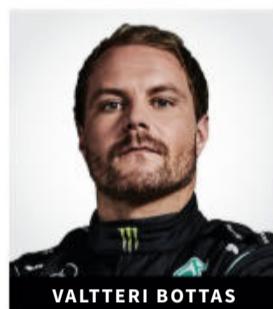
Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen stole the show, but weren't quite perfect in Bahrain. But Ferrari's rising star again performed miracles

ALEX KALINAUKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

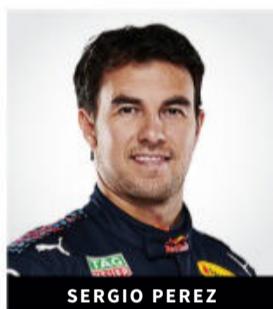


VALTTERI BOTTAS

9 If we allowed the luxury of decimal place ratings, this would be a 9.9. Mercedes now has F1's second fastest car, Hamilton started second and beat the fastest car. But his lap 51 slip off the road handed Verstappen 0.6s, allowed him to close and make a pass that would have won the race had it stuck.

7 Marked down by 0.2s qualifying deficit to his team-mate. Not to blame for the slow second stop, but his slower start let in Leclerc. Lost time battling back and cost his team an early strategy card versus Verstappen. Bahrain's powerful undercut put him back into play before the poor stop.

RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ



MAX VERSTAPPEN

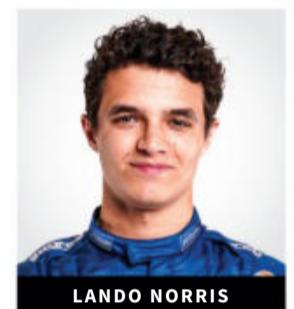
8 Gains an extra mark for his recovery after an electrical issue cut his power on the formation lap. Safety car made Red Bull's three-stopper effectively a two-stopper. Late pass on Ricciardo was great, but he just cannot afford to be knocked out in Q2 again in a car capable of pole.

9 A single error costs Verstappen full marks. Swept practice and aced qualifying, but the botched late pass is the difference. Max had time and tyre life that he wasted trying the Turn 4 move with Giovinazzi on the inside. It almost worked, but he ran wide and never got another chance.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO



LANDO NORRIS

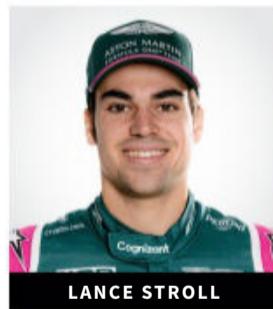
7 Credit for beating Norris in qualifying, but in the race was beaten by Leclerc in what appears to be a slower package. Showed his class on Saturday, only to struggle for pace on Sunday – unable to pass Leclerc *a la* Norris – and was left “not that impressed” with his own performance.

9 Moves on the first lap against Ricciardo and Gasly after the safety car were judged to perfection. Passed Leclerc into Turn 1 after the virtual safety car, then “looked after the tyres and controlled the pace” brilliantly. Misses a maximum score only for qualifying behind Ricciardo.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL



LANCE STROLL

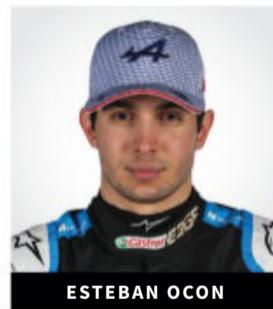
3 Bold one-stop strategy nearly saved him from this mark. It was always going to be tough. But he made two major mistakes: the yellow flag Q1 infringement after Mazepin spun off, and clattering into Ocon after being passed late on, which he bizarrely initially claimed was the Alpine's fault.

7 Did well reaching Q3 but benefited from Perez and Tsunoda struggles. Good start and wasn't to blame for early collision with Sainz, then got stuck into plenty of fights. Enjoyed twice passing Alonso, but lacked pace on a long final stint on hards. Should have stopped last-lap pass by Tsunoda.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO



ESTEBAN OCON

8 Gets a bonus mark for making Q3 with a package that he suggested struggles to automatically make that segment. Was typically bold at the start but lacked pace after triggering the first stops in the midfield. Detritus sandwich wrapper meant his rear brakes overheated.

6 Not to blame for his final Q1 run being spoiled by Sainz getting stuck on the exit of the Turn 8 hairpin but was vulnerable to an early exit by being behind the Alfas. Alonso making Q3 hurts his score. Ran behind Raikkonen in the race. The hit by Vettel after he'd passed with DRS didn't help his cause.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC



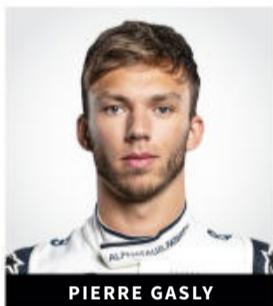
CARLOS SAINZ JR

10 Sensational fourth place on the grid, on just one run in Q3. In the race, put in a bold lap-one pass on Bottas and was powerless to stop the faster Mercedes and Norris coming by. Beat Ricciardo's faster car home after over-cutting at the first stops and was never going to halt Perez.

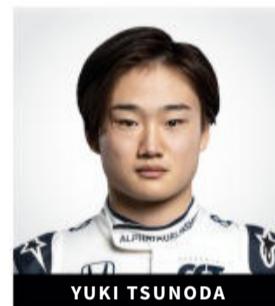
7 Finished where Ferrari should be, based on the pecking order. But ends up very close to a six after a poor lap one versus Alonso and Stroll, and for contact with the latter after the safety car, as he went for a Turn 10 move that was never really on. Qualifying only 0.04s faster than an Alpine doesn't help.



ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY



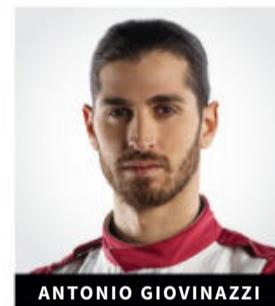
YUKI TSUNODA

7 Fine job to qualify fifth – the only non-Red Bull/Mercedes to traverse Q2 on the mediums. But safety car restart mistake cost him. Slow tyre warm-up meant he lacked grip to avoid Ricciardo in Turn 6. Damage to wing and floor hampered him and a gearbox issue caused his retirement.

ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

7 Qualified behind Giovinazzi and slipped back behind him with a poor Turn 4 exit after the safety car restart (he'd forced his way by exiting the race's first corner). Raced well from there, including brilliant brief fight with Russell, only to miss out on a point as he was homing in on Stroll at the finish.

8 Earns an extra mark compared to Raikkonen because, without his slow first pitstop (not his fault), he'd have been close to Kimi at the end. Also the lead Alfa in qualifying and made up for getting pinched on the inside of Turn 1 by capitalising on Raikkonen's safety car restart error.

HAAS



NIKITA MAZEPIN



MICK SCHUMACHER

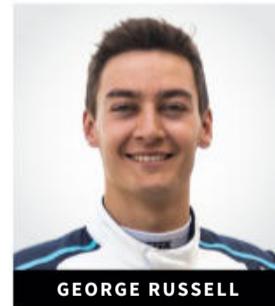
1 How to sum up his first F1 weekend? See the scoring system explained, below. Spun twice across practice, then was caught out by a gust exiting Turn 13 early in Q1. Haas said his Q1 Turn 1 spin was due to a brake-by-wire issue. Dropped it on cold tyres after two race corners.

5 There were worse F1 debuts (see left), but Mick's own unforced spin drops him from a 'solid' six. The safety car restart spin was the worst part, and meant he had an overall lonely race from there. He outqualified Mazepin, but needed the final run the Russian never got to get ahead.

WILLIAMS



NICHOLAS LATIFI

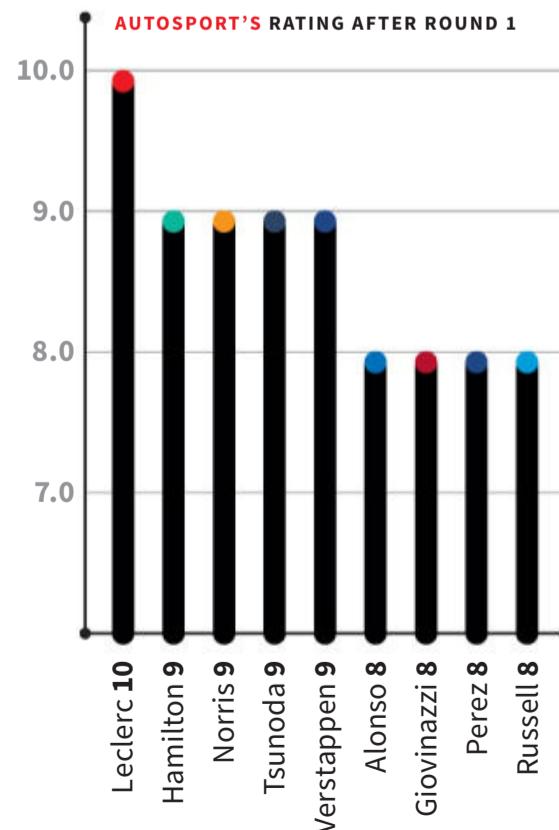


GEORGE RUSSELL

6 Hard to score because of his in-race reliability woes. Managed to outqualify Vettel through circumstance, but his gap to Russell is the difference in their scores. From early in the race an engine boost leak robbed him of power and contributed to his spin late on. It was also why he retired.

8 Russell's latest Q1 progression was aided by others hitting yellow flags, but he still found a 1.2s improvement. Made a good start but paid the price for being too timid on the rest of lap one. Felt his pace improved, but always needed others to hit trouble to finish ahead of his grid spot.

TOP AVERAGE RATINGS



SCORING SYSTEM EXPLAINED

- 10** Exceptional performance, maximising the result and excelling, either through overturning a major obstacle or dominance over rivals.
- 9** Outstanding performance, but without quite reaching the heights required for a maximum score.
- 8** Very good performance with no major errors and a final result that reflected the car's pace.
- 7** Good performance, and a reasonable result, but a little inconsistent in some aspects or without extracting the maximum from the car.
- 6** Solid performance but without getting the most out of the car or nailing it when it really mattered.
- 5** Patchy performance, not necessarily off the pace but failing to string together the weekend well and coming away short of a good result.
- 4** Disappointing effort, failing to maximise the car and making mistakes.
- 3** Poor performance, either through struggling to get the most out of the car or falling short through a massive error.
- 2** Very poor performance, with mediocre pace and mistakes, a wasted weekend.
- 1** Terrible. A performance with no redeeming features.

Zhou kickstarts expected F2 title push as rookies come to the fore

FIA FORMULA 2
SAKHIR (BHR)
27-28 MARCH
ROUND 1/8

Three race winners, final-lap duels for victory, post-race controversy and rookies coming to the fore – FIA Formula 2's new format delivered in spades at the Bahrain season opener.

While rookies Liam Lawson and Oscar Piastri stole the show in Saturday's sprint races, it was Guanyu Zhou who emerged with the championship lead after a superb drive to victory in Sunday's feature race.

The Formula 1 feeder series introduced an unconventional three-race format. Friday's qualifying session set the grid for Sunday's feature race, while the top 10 were reversed to form the grid for the first of two 45-minute sprint races on Saturday. The race-one results, with the top 10 inverted, would set the grid for the second sprint contest. There had been suggestions that drivers and teams could manipulate the system, but such shenanigans appeared absent come the race weekend.

UNI Virtuosi driver Zhou showed why he's rated among the favourites to win the title on Friday by pipping fellow Alpine Academy rival Christian Lundgaard to pole position by 0.003 seconds.

Race one delivered a battle between Red Bull juniors Lawson and Jehan Daruvala



after polesitter Theo Pourchaire retired from second, suddenly slowing to a halt midway through the race. That left Lawson, who led after an electric getaway from third, to fend off a charging Daruvala. The New Zealander held his nerve to score a memorable F2 debut win as fellow rookie David Beckmann completed the podium.

A lot of the pre-season championship predictions surrounded Prema Racing's Robert Shwartzman as the highest-placed returning driver, but his weekend started badly, the Russian qualifying 11th after missing the final minutes of the session when his car went into safety mode.

He earned a fine fourth in the opener but

that was the highlight for the Ferrari junior, who retired from race two following contact with Dan Ticktum, and finished seventh after incurring a drivethrough penalty for a collision with Roy Nissany in the finale.

Saturday's sprint under lights will arguably go down as one of F2's greatest ever races and the day that the F1 paddock properly took notice of Piastri's talent. The reigning FIA F3 champion made the most of a late safety car period to switch to soft tyres, allowing him to surge through from eighth before executing a thrilling last-lap pass on Zhou to take a stunning maiden victory in his Prema-run machine.

Piastri's run to victory was assisted



SUTTON/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

RESULTS ROUND 1/8, SAKHIR (BHR), 27-28 MARCH FEATURE RACE (32 LAPS - 107.459 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Guanyu Zhou (CHN)	UNIVirtuosi Racing	1h02m27.858s
2	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	Carlin	+0.482s
3	Liam Lawson (NZL)	Hitech Grand Prix	+2.950s
4	Richard Verschoor (NLD)	MP Motorsport	+4.095s
5	Marcus Armstrong (NZL)	DAMS	+9.792s
6	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Carlin	+11.926s
7	Robert Shwartzman (RUS)	Prema Racing	+12.159s
8	Theo Pourchaire (FRA)	ART Grand Prix	+18.479s
9	Felipe Drugovich (BRA)	UNIVirtuosi Racing	+19.764s
10	Matteo Nannini (ITA)	HWA Racelab	+19.852s
11	David Beckmann (DEU)	Charouz Racing	+20.905s
12	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	ART Grand Prix	+21.256s
13	Juri Vips (EST)	Hitech Grand Prix	+27.385s
14	Marino Sato (JPN)	Trident	+28.826s
15	Ralph Boschung (CHE)	Campos Racing	+31.535s
16	Guilherme Samaia (BRA)	Charouz Racing	+40.620s
17	Bent Viscaal (NLD)	Trident	+48.452s
18	Lirim Zendeli (DEU)	MP Motorsport	+1m01.952s
19	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	Prema Racing	29 laps-accident
R	Gianluca Petecof (BRA)	Campos Racing	15 laps-fire extinguisher
R	Roy Nissany (ISR)	DAMS	0 laps-accident
R	Alessio Deledda (ITA)	HWA Racelab	0 laps-accident



QUALIFYING

1 **Zhou** 1m42.848s;
 2 **Lundgaard** 1m42.851s;
 3 **Drugovich** 1m43.211s;
 4 **Ticktum** 1m43.338s;
 5 **Verschoor** 1m43.443s;
 6 **Daruvala** 1m43.475s;
 7 **Piastri** 1m43.478s;
 8 **Lawson** 1m43.519s;
 9 **Beckmann** 1m43.559s;
 10 **Pourchaire** 1m43.585s;
 11 **Shwartzman** 1m43.694s;
 12 **Boschung** 1m43.704s;
 13 **Armstrong** 1m43.729s;
 14 **Nissany** 1m43.768s;
 15 **Viscaal** 1m43.839s;
 16 **Zendeli** 1m43.955s;
 17 **Samaia** 1m44.227s;
 18 **Sato** 1m44.654s;
 19 **Nannini** 1m44.825s;
 20 **Petecof** 1m45.053s;
 21 **Deledda** 1m46.712s;
 22 **Vips** DSQ

Winner's average speed 103.219mph.

Fastest lap **Shwartzman** 1m46.380s, 113.802mph.

SPRINT RACE 1 (23 LAPS - 77.193 MILES)

GRID FOR SPRINT RACE 1 Decided by result of qualifying, with top 10 reversed.

1 **Lawson** 44m11.624s; 2 **Daruvala** +0.925s; 3 **Beckmann** +14.382s; 4 **Shwartzman** +17.078s; 5 **Piastri** +17.504s; 6 **Lundgaard** +18.552s; 7 **Zhou** +22.289s; 8 **Ticktum** +24.860s; 9 **Zendeli** +27.291s; 10 **Vips** +27.933s; 11 **Samaia** +31.908s; 12 **Nissany** +32.305s; 13 **Viscaal** +33.694s; 14 **Nannini** +33.963s; 15 **Sato** +46.885s; 16 **Drugovich** +1m03.250s; 17 **Petecof** +1m06.941s; 18 **Deledda** +1m08.910s; R **Pourchaire** 12 laps-technical; R **Armstrong** 2 laps-engine; R **Boschung** 2 laps-technical; R **Verschoor** 2 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 104.801mph. **Fastest lap** **Zendeli** 1m50.886s, 109.177mph.

SPRINT RACE 2 (23 LAPS - 77.193 MILES)

GRID FOR SPRINT RACE 2 Decided by result of Sprint race 1, with top 10 finishers reversed.

1 **Piastri** 46m19.610s; 2 **Lundgaard** +0.774s; 3 **Zhou** +2.076s; 4 **Daruvala** +2.494s; 5 **Verschoor** +2.966s; 6 **Pourchaire** +3.759s; 7 **Beckmann** +6.387s; 8 **Sato** +8.096s; 9 **Nannini** +9.733s; 10 **Armstrong** +12.180s; 11 **Samaia** +12.442s; 12 **Viscaal** +16.744s; 13 **Petecof** +17.569s; 14 **Drugovich** +24.547s; 15 **Nissany** +27.471s; 16 **Vips** +36.980s; 17 **Boschung** +48.466s; R **Deledda** 19 laps; R **Lawson** 14 laps-accident; R **Zendeli** 12 laps-accident; R **Ticktum** 0 laps-accident; R **Shwartzman** 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 99.976mph. **Fastest lap** **Boschung** 1m45.507s, 114.744mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Zhou** 41; 2 **Lawson** 30; 3 **Daruvala** 28; 4 **Piastri** 21; 5 **Ticktum** 19; 6 **Verschoor** 18; 7 **Lundgaard** 16; 8 **Shwartzman** 16; 9 **Beckmann** 12; 10 **Armstrong** 10.



by polesitter Juri Vips falling out of contention with a downshift issue in the closing stages while poised to attack long-time leader Zhou, who nursed his worn tyres home to third behind Alpine Academy rivals Piastri and Lundgaard.

"I think that has got to go down as the craziest race I've ever had and the craziest victory I've ever had," said Piastri.

Lundgaard was demoted to ninth at the finish after stewards applied a 10s penalty. But the reprimand, for earlier contact with Lirim Zendeli, had actually been served during his pitstop, prompting officials to reinstate Lundgaard to second.

Aggrieved to miss out on victory, Zhou made up for it on Sunday with an excellent drive to claim the feature race. Starting on hard tyres, the Chinese driver led from pole but succumbed to his soft-shod rivals Lundgaard, Piastri and Felipe Drugovich in the opening half of the race. But after pitting for softs just before a second safety car, Zhou came from seventh to win courtesy of some slick passes.

Piastri threatened to overhaul Zhou for a second win, but was overtaken by Ticktum late on. In the process, contact was made at Turn 2, putting Piastri out of the race. Lawson completed the podium, having overcome Richard Verschoor.

Zhou has started as he means to go on, holding an 11-point lead over Lawson.

TOM HOWARD



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Herberth Porsche edges into lead as sun sets on Friday's dusk race



Hat-trick hero Herberth bags two-part Mugello win

24H SERIES
MUGELLO (ITA)
26-27 MARCH
ROUND 2/8

Herberth Motorsport blows out 25 candles on its birthday cake this year. It marked this silver jubilee by scoring a slice of history in Italy last weekend. The Porsche squad became the first team to score a hat-trick of wins in the Mugello 12 Hours as drivers Ralf Bohn/Daniel Allemann/Robert Renauer/Alfred Renauer added to the successes of 2015 and 2020.

Organised by the 24H Series, the Mugello round was split into two bouts – a four-hour race on Friday, the remaining eight hours running on Saturday. For a series that could only muster 15 entries at times last season, a much-improved 41-car field took to the Tuscany Tarmac.

The lead #91 Porsche 911 GT3-R from

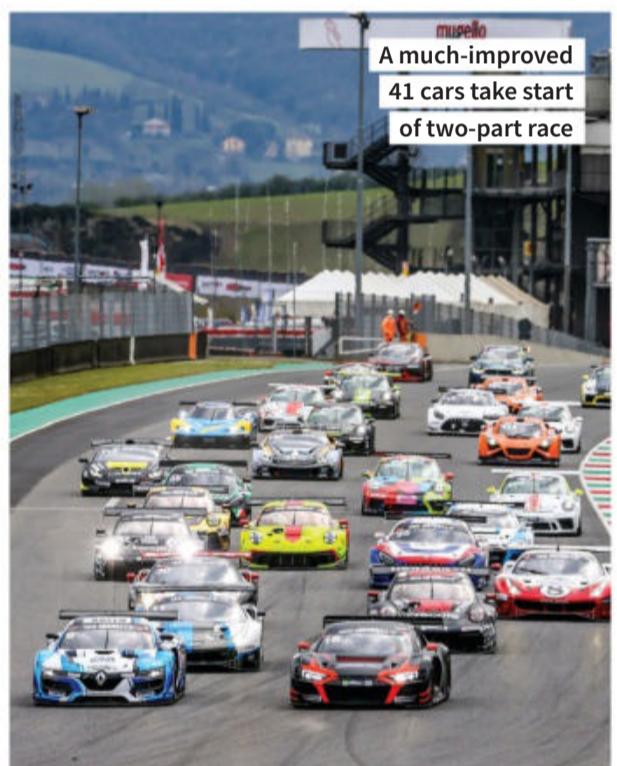
Herberth Motorsport lined up a sound sixth on the grid. And a burst of speed-limited Code 60 periods late into the Friday contest was played expertly by the German attack and bumped it into the lead as the first chequered flag was waved. That came despite Robert Renauer having to back off by over two seconds per lap to ensure he didn't put the sister #92 911 – shared by Jurgen Haring/Bobby Gonzales/Stefan Aust/Marco Seefried – a lap down after the third-starting crew hit trouble at the start and fell down to 11th.

With the pace of Renauer stymied, rival Porsche crew T2 Racing was kept only at arm's length across the line. "Sometimes it's harder to go slow on track than fast. But that was all part of our plan and that really helped our team-mates," said Renauer.

Plenty of fuel on board and with healthy tyres, Herberth Motorsport appeared in good stead when the race resumed the following day. The first round of pitstops did shuffle the car down to fourth, but by playing a strategy of short-term pain for long-term gain, as the race panned out and the leading crews again stopped for their splashes and dashes, Renauer was in the hotseat to secure the spoils by three laps.

He added: "It was a brilliant race for us: brilliant pitstops; no mistakes; really good teamwork; and we were confident we had enough fuel for another 10 minutes."

While the T2 squad slumped to an eventual fifth, Scuderia Praha was on the prowl. Taking turns aboard the Ferrari 488 GT3 were Josef Kral/Miroslav Vyboh/Matus Vyboh. Although the team would fall well



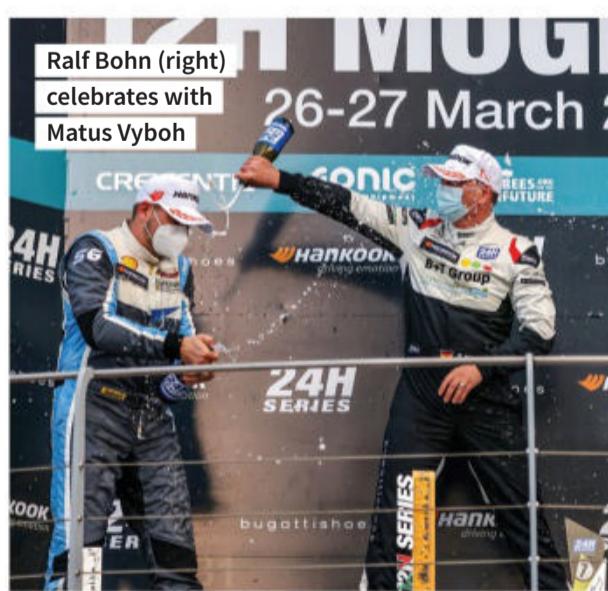
WEEKEND WINNERS

24H SERIES
MUGELLO (ITA)
Daniel Allemann/Ralf Bohn/
Alfred Renauer/Robert Renauer
Herberth Motorsport (Porsche 911 GT3-R)

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short of securing the Mugello treble for itself, Matus Vyboh snared a fine second place with a gutsy move around the outside of Dinamic Motorsport driver Ivan Jacoma. Jacoma and team-mates Mauro Calamia and Roberto Pampanini still claimed the final podium spot.





Vinales has wind at his back at Losail to win over record-breaking Ducatis

MOTOGP
LOSAIL (QAT)
28 MARCH
ROUND 1/19

Over the winter, Maverick Vinales promised to come back as a new and improved Yamaha rider for the 2021 MotoGP campaign. Armed with an M1 bike that's clearly a step ahead of its predecessor, he delivered on that promise in emphatic fashion during the season-opening Qatar Grand Prix.

The winner of the previous two editions of the race, Andrea Dovizioso, might not be on the grid anymore, but the Qatar GP was very much still expected to be Ducati's to lose. This was further cemented by new factory signing Francesco Bagnaia's lap

record-busting pole time on Saturday.

And with Ducati satellite team Pramac's Johann Zarco setting an all-time MotoGP top speed record in FP4 of a staggering 225.1mph, while Yamaha's power deficit remained, all fingers pointed towards a Sunday dominated by red machinery.

But Vinales' race pace in practice was incredibly strong, the Spaniard pleased with the ease at which he could make those lap times and the apparent consistency on used rubber. But calling Vinales a favourite pre-race was still a hard bet, because all too often in recent years his form has gone missing in races while riding on top of the Dunlop rubber laid down on the track by the preceding Moto2 contest.

The early laps would be telling. And they couldn't have been much worse for

Yamaha, as four Ducatis – Bagnaia, Zarco, Jack Miller and Pramac rookie rider Jorge Martin from 14th – shot up to the head of the pack off the line, leapfrogging the factory Yamaha duo on the front row.

Vinales found his way past Martin for fifth on lap three, and then set a new race lap record of 1m54.624s on the following tour, before dispatching Miller on lap eight for fourth place.

The top speed of the Yamaha may be no match for the Ducati, but a strong headwind softened the Desmosedici's potency down the straights. Coupled with the strength of the M1 through the twisty sections of the Losail circuit, that meant Miller could do nothing to retaliate.

Vinales disposed of new factory team-mate Fabio Quartararo at the start of lap 11 of 22. He overcame Zarco next time around and snatched the lead away from Bagnaia three tours later.

Vinales rode the early stages of the race using the front tyre more, taking advantage of the improved feeling he had, which in turn was preserving his rear soft rubber. Keeping his pace at the low-mid 1m55s bracket, he was able to use his durable rear tyre to ease away to his ninth MotoGP victory, declaring afterwards that the Yamaha of old "is back".

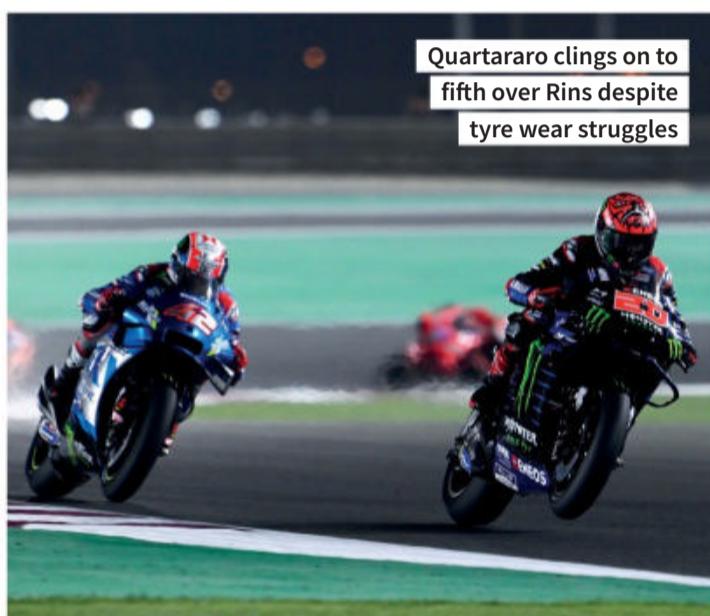
All Ducati riders hit tyre troubles in the closing stages, Miller worst affected in ninth having "hit a wall".

Hard-charging defending world champion Joan Mir looked set to

Bagnaia took his first MotoGP pole and led early on for Ducati



ALL PICS: GOLD AND GOOSE
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IMAGES



further ruin Ducati's evening on the last lap. The Suzuki rider rediscovered his good feelings on the GSX-RR for Sunday after a difficult weekend and moved into second on the last lap, having started 10th. But his plan to get better drive out of the final corner by running slightly wide didn't work out and he was out-dragged by Zarco and Bagnaia on the run to the chequered flag.

Quartararo had a "disaster" with tyre wear he hadn't experienced at all on the 2021 Yamaha before the race but salvaged fifth ahead of Suzuki's Alex Rins – whose race wasn't helped by him not engaging launch control at the start.

The Espargaro brothers ran line astern at the flag, Aleix on the Aprilia – proving the sound marque's pre-season form was "no joke" – heading Pol. Content with his debut for Honda, Pol admitted he was "angry" with eighth place as he's "there" in terms of pace. Reigning Moto2 champion Enea Bastianini completed the top 10 on his debut.

Riding the whole race with his holeshot device activated due to an issue, Franco Morbidelli came away from a race for which he was branded a favourite by Miller with no points in 18th.

The 2021 season is seen by many as the time for Vinales to really show what he's made of. If his Qatar form continues through into the rest of the campaign, he'll be tough to beat.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 1/19, LOSAIL (QAT), 28 MARCH (22 LAPS - 73.545 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	42m28.663s
2	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+1.092s
3	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+1.129s
4	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+1.222s
5	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+3.030s
6	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	+3.357s
7	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+5.934s
8	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	+5.990s
9	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	+7.058s
10	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+9.288s
11	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	Honda	+10.299s
12	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+10.742s
13	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	+11.457s
14	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+14.100s
15	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+16.422s
16	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+20.916s
17	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+21.026s
18	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+23.892s
19	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	+46.346s
R	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	13 laps-accident
R	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	6 laps-accident
R	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	0 laps-accident

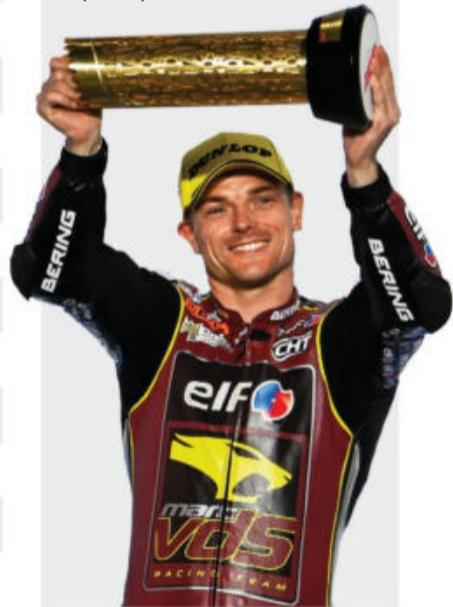
WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

LOSAIL (QAT)
Sam Lowes (below)
Marc VDS Racing
(Kalex)

MOTO 3

LOSAIL (QAT)
Jaume Masia
Ajo Motorsport
(KTM)



Winner's average speed 103.883mph. **Fastest lap** Vinales 1m54.624s, 104.992mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Bagnaia 1m52.772s; 2 Quartararo 1m53.038s; 3 Vinales 1m53.088s; 4 Rossi 1m53.114s; 5 Miller 1m53.215s; 6 Zarco 1m53.286s; 7 Morbidelli 1m53.313s; 8 A Espargaro 1m53.315s; 9 Rins 1m53.490s; 10 Mir 1m53.682s; 11 Nakagami 1m53.721s; 12 P Espargaro 1m53.930s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Nakagami 1m53.577s; 2 Mir 1m53.728s; 3 Bastianini 1m53.733s; 4 Martin 1m53.840s; 5 Oliveira 1m53.915s; 6 Marquez 1m53.958s; 7 Bradl 1m53.995s; 8 Marini 1m54.122s; 9 Binder 1m54.240s; 10 Petrucci 1m54.443s; 11 Lecuona 1m54.627s; 12 Savadori 1m55.183s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Vinales 25; 2 Zarco 20; 3 Bagnaia 16; 4 Mir 13; 5 Quartararo 11; 6 Rins 10; 7 A Espargaro 9; 8 P Espargaro 8; 9 Miller 7; 10 Bastianini 6; 11 Bradl 5; 12 Rossi 4; 13 Oliveira 3; 14 Binder 2; 15 Martin 1; 16 Marini 0; 17 Lecuona 0; 18 Morbidelli 0; 19 Savadori 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Yamaha 25; 2 Ducati 20; 3 Suzuki 13; 4 Aprilia 9; 5 Honda 8; 6 KTM 3.


Losail International Circuit | 2021



NEXT REPORT

**GRAND PRIX
OF DOHA**
8 APRIL ISSUE

Can a second visit to the Losail venue provide Vinales with an opportunity to score back-to-back wins for the second time in his MotoGP career? Or will the wind die down to favour Ducati?

Net zero-carbon series aims to spotlight and aid climate change-affected regions



Your guide to motorsport's latest big thing

Extreme E kicks off this weekend. Some of its innovations are controversial, but they have also helped attract an impressive list of competitors for the inaugural campaign

MATT KEW

It's 31 months since Formula E co-founder Alejandro Agag and Indianapolis 500 victor Gil de Ferran had their lightbulb moment. Finally, this weekend Extreme E and its RMS St Helena 'floating paddock' dock for a maiden Desert X-Prix event in Saudi Arabia. Their brainchild is built around three core elements, and truth be told you can pick fault with each one.

First off, the cars. Each of the nine teams signed up to this inaugural five-round season will race one of the 550bhp all-electric Odyssey 21 E-SUVs. The niobium-reinforced steel alloy tubular frame has been built by French firm Spark Racing Technology, which is responsible for the construction of the Formula E cars. Despite an initial deal with McLaren Applied, Williams Advanced Engineering has been given the contract to produce the battery. This and the mid-



mounted motor will propel the 1650kg machines to 62mph in 4.5 seconds. Six-piston Alcon brakes will slow them down. Meanwhile, Continental is the sole tyre supplier. And while the hardware is standardised for now, various elements of the car's design can be modified to resemble road cars should a team partner a manufacturer.

But in the wider automotive industry, electric SUVs are an inherent contradiction. The fact that these machines are larger than conventional saloons and hatchbacks means they require

more materials to be built. Is that the most eco-friendly way to do things? That's before you offset the carbon footprint it takes to mine the lithium for the batteries, ship it across the world to be put into a car and then freighted to a forecourt to be sold in Southern California.

Next up are the drivers. Jenson Button, Jamie Chadwick, Mattias



SPACESUITMEDIA



Ekstrom, Johan Kristoffersson, Sébastien Loeb, Carlos Sainz Sr and Stéphane Sarrazin dominate the headlines. Any nascent championship would beg, borrow and steal just to hold a candle to that rollcall. Extreme E mandates that each team runs one female and one male driver. This is the initial step needed to achieve greater gender equality in motorsport, to inspire a new generation of female talent that's been tacitly excluded by the lack of representation. But when this rule was introduced, soon came the detractors who cited 'unfair' positive discrimination.

The third core element to Extreme E is the 'Legacy' programmes, with the series billing itself as "the first sport built out of concern for the climate crisis". By racing in rainforests, on glaciers and next to oceans that have been damaged the most, the aim is to shine a light on what can be done to help the Earth heal. This will be done by planting mangroves, conducting beach cleans and educating locals in each country as Extreme E wants to have a positive impact that endures. The criticism here is that it's another case of 'white knight' syndrome.

What few can dispute though is the list of names associated with Extreme E. That driver ensemble aside, Formula 1 world champions and household names Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Button have all entered teams. The championship also has a near-clean sweep of UK broadcast deals with ITV, BT Sport, Sky Sports and the BBC, with the in-house production led by commentators Jennie Gow and Andrew Coley. The hope is that spectacular motorsport can bring a bigger audience to raise awareness of the damaged environments over that of a conventional nature documentary, this side of David Attenborough.

For those who do make those three attacks against Extreme E but respect the talent involved, the inconvenient truth is that you can't have one without the others. The motive for the great and the good of racing plus the biggest networks in the country backing Agag is because of these electrified, equality-driven and sustainable principles.

"The reason for me joining Extreme E is because it's built on this social purpose of helping to raise awareness and showcasing the negative, damaging effects of climate change in all these remote locations," says Rosberg. "I want to trailblaze Rosberg X Racing as a team with all our impact projects. Our motto is, 'We will leave every place we

go to in a better state than when we arrived.' That is absolutely essential."

Come the end of this inaugural campaign, Extreme E will have a net-zero carbon footprint. The Odyssey machines will be charged by hydrogen systems, and very limited numbers of personnel will be on-site. The usual champagne-sipping VIPs aren't welcome. It's precisely because of these measures that Hamilton and company have entered. Regardless of Extreme E's credentials as a race series, they simply wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Legacy projects and similar measures.

Fortunately, the racing credentials appear sound as the format resembles an, erm, hybrid of the Dakar Rally and World Rallycross. Over two days at each event, the cars will battle side-by-side over two laps of a 10-mile off-road course. There are four qualifying heats, two semi-finals and a final to declare a winner, with positions rather than times being the deciding factor. A mid-race pitstop will allow the female and male driver to swap, and there's no preordained order for which of the two takes the start. The equal equipment, very limited pre-season testing and a whole variety of rallying experience (or lack thereof) promises unpredictability.

Unlike Formula E, which requires drivers to lift and coast to preserve energy, the cars will race flat-out. And like Fanboost in its electric counterpart, Extreme E wouldn't be an Agag championship without a gimmick. This comes courtesy of Hyperboost – a higher power mode granted to the driver pairing that completes the longest jump over the first obstacle.

The criticisms waged against Extreme E before a wheel has whirred round in anger do have their validations. But if the action delivers as anticipated, if through its net-zero carbon emissions the series leaves no trace, and if the local environments benefit as expected, who wouldn't welcome a championship that will likely have Button banging doorhandles with Loeb and Sainz? Extreme E is an environmental force for good and a motorsport spectacle all rolled into one, and that prospect should be relished and celebrated. ■

→ P42 EXTREME E TEAM BY TEAM



A real race of champions

Everything you need to know about Alejandro Agag's latest electric ensemble as they prepare to make history

MATT KEW



SPACESUITMEDIA

ABT CUPRA

Extreme E has, by accident rather than design, become the default headline motorsport programme for Abt this year. After winning five DTM teams' titles between 2002 and 2009, the tuning company will stay put in the German tin-top series with a three-car charge. But this comes as the halo Class 1 regulations make way for less inspiring GT3 kit.

Abt then missed out on a 125th birthday present to itself in 2021. It guided Lucas di Grassi to the 2016-17 Formula E drivers' crown while fronting Audi's entry. In response to the marque's decision to quit the championship at the end of this season, Abt submitted a bid over the winter to buy the team licence, but the paperwork wasn't signed in time.

That leaves Extreme E. Partnering Cupra – the SEAT offshoot was the first manufacturer to sign with a team – Abt maintains its enduring alliance with the Volkswagen Group.



Claudia Hurtgen

A touring and sportscar pro, Hurtgen backed up her 1997 Daytona 24 Hours class win with a Le Mans

GT2 podium the next year. While a 2000 Monaco Historic Grand Prix race win in a Maserati 300S proves skill managing oversteer, she has no off-road competition experience beyond Extreme E testing.



Mattias Ekstrom

His Extreme E assault is the 20th season in which Ekstrom will have raced for the Abt team. That time together is headlined by a brace of DTM titles. When the Swede bade farewell to the smooth asphalt, he proved adept on the rough stuff, winning the 2016 World Rallycross crown.

ACCIONA SAINZ

This Spanish operation took a leaf out of the British Touring Car Championship's book when it came to deciding a name that blurs the line between sponsorship and race team. In truth, electric mobility firm QEV Technologies is behind the entry. But it will operate under the Acciona banner as part of a commercial tie-up with the renewable energy company, which in 2017 backed the first all-electric car to finish the Dakar Rally.

Clearly, however, the most exciting part of the name is that of two-time World Rally champion and three-time Dakar victor Carlos Sainz Sr. A friend of Extreme E co-founder Alejandro Agag, Sainz is part of the convoluted ownership structure.

QEV, meanwhile, has ties to sister all-electric championship Formula E, having assisted the running of the Mahindra Racing and NIO 333 squads. Initial noise about employing ex-Formula 1 driver Pedro de la Rosa as team principal has gone quiet.



SPACESUITMEDIA



Laia Sanz

There have been fleeting 24H Series and SEAT Eurocup outings with middling results, but on two wheels

Sanz is first-rate. She holds over 30 international trials, enduro and cross-country titles. In the female motorbike division of the Dakar Rally, she won 10 times between 2000 and 2013.



Carlos Sainz Sr

The lad in the F1 Ferrari is still a long way off his dad's legendary status in the sport: 58-year-old Sainz Sr was the 1990 and 1992 World Rally champion, after all. While there's one Extreme E rival with even stronger WRC pedigree, off-road king Sainz stands proud thanks to those Dakar Rally triumphs.

ANDRETTI UNITED

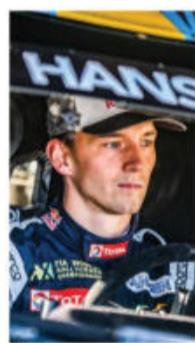
United Autosports and well-established IndyCar and Formula E team Andretti Autosport have once again combined to form the succinctly named Andretti United. In time, the entry into Extreme E could well become this Anglo-American union's middle child.

Via the Walkinshaw Andretti United concern, since 2018 the pair have competed together in Australian Supercars with a brace of Holden Commodore ZBs. Now that McLaren Racing has signed an option for a place on the Formula E grid for the advent of the Gen3 era, its boss, United Autosports co-owner Zak Brown, will likely be persuading the Woking boardroom for a further collaboration with Michael Andretti to replace the departing BMW. In the meantime, the Extreme E bid – which was launched by Andretti, with United coming on board soon after – marks the off-road debut for both class squads.

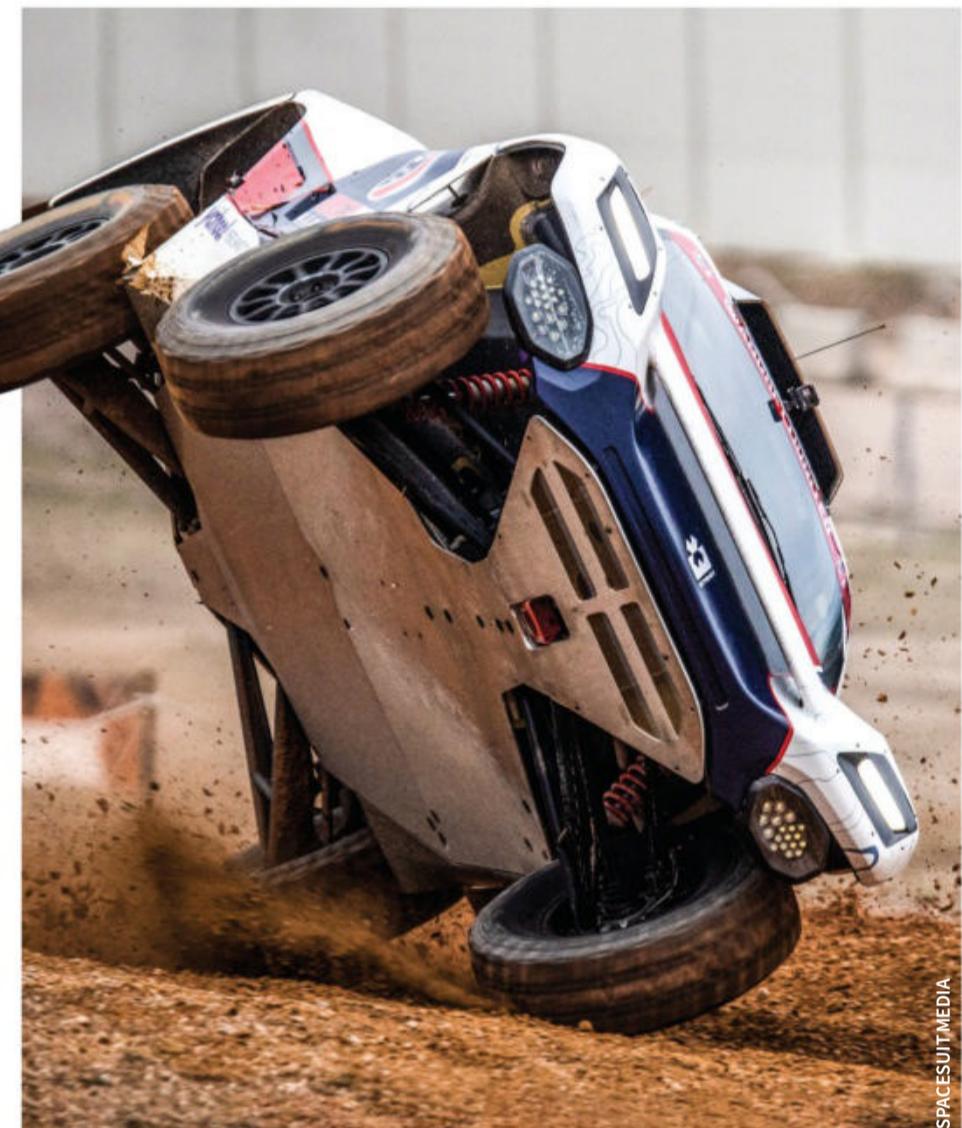
**Catie Munnings**

An excellent TV presenter in her spare time, Red Bull-backed Munnings has been on the radar for a little

while. The 23-year-old contested Rally Sweden last year but is best-known for competing in the European Rally Championship. Extreme E is by far the highest-profile gig of her career.

**Timmy Hansen**

After a respectable run up the junior single-seater ladder to Formula Renault 2.0 level, the eldest Hansen brother made his switch to rallycross competition in 2012. He's since upheld family honour – dad Kenneth is a 14-time FIA mixed-surface champion – by winning the World title in 2019.



SPACESUITMEDIA

CHIP GANASSI RACING

Although the Odyssey 21 E-SUV powertrain is standardised for all nine teams, the Extreme E machine entered by American motorsport powerhouse Chip Ganassi has received some styling tweaks that should help it stand out. As truck maker GMC brings back the Hummer moniker with an all-electric 1000bhp model for 2022, it's signed a deal with the Ganassi race team, which counts nine IndyCar drivers' championships, four CART/Champ Car drivers' titles and four Indianapolis 500 wins from its 30-year history.

The car will receive bodywork resembling the headlights and grille of the forthcoming Hummer as a result. And Arnold Schwarzenegger's Los Angeles runabout has some off-road competition lineage to boot. NASCAR veteran Robby Gordon has contested the Dakar Rally in Hummer kit between 2006 and 2015, scoring six stage wins and a third place in 2009.

Ganassi, meanwhile, has rough-stuff exposure from a couple of seasons in the US-based Global Rallycross Championship, which yielded two wins and a further nine podiums.

**Sara Price**

Lady Gaga and Jason Statham stunt double Price was the first Extreme E driver to be officially signed by a team. She's also the first female racer ever on the books at Chip Ganassi Racing. She secured the seat thanks to 19 US Motocross titles plus a flurry of Stadium Super Truck appearances.

**Kyle LeDuc**

LeDuc's name might not register too highly this side of the Atlantic, but he's a formidable dirt racer in the US. That's on account of his seven Lucas Oil Offroad Racing Series Pro-4 championship titles and two more on the World stage. He was also fifth in the 2016 Baja 1000.



HISPANO SUIZA

Hispano Suiza is the Extreme E equivalent of the Spyker Formula 1 team: both trace their names back to the turn of the 20th century when they started out in the aviation industry. Both then transitioned to the manufacturing of cars, which were sporting and luxury rivals for Rolls-Royce, before falling out of public consciousness for several decades. Both then found new ownership and enjoyed a revival, led by a high-profile motorsport campaign.

Hispano Suiza's muted comeback didn't really get going until it debuted the 1000bhp all-electric Carmen concept car at the 2019 Geneva Motor Show. Now it's entering Extreme E as a replacement for HWA, which pulled out for "economic and strategic reasons" that were "mainly driven" by the global health crisis.

The team will be managed by Juli Mundet Caballero, a long-time World Rallycross engineer who previously worked at Campos Racing during the SEAT Leon's tenure at World and European Touring Car level.



Christine Giampaoli Zonca

It's five years since Giampaoli Zonca bagged the spoils in the female category of the Spanish Gravel Rally Championship. Since then, she's twice entered Rally Spain in a Peugeot 208 R2 before better establishing herself in the US and Mexico, where she plies her trade in off-road buggies.



Oliver Bennett

Following an injury, the Bristolian converted from motocross to rally a Group N Subaru Impreza.

Bennett was third in the 2017 British Rallycross championship, taking the most points but losing out on dropped scores. Since then, he's performed at World RX level and in North America.

VELOCE RACING

An Esports team that's come to life, Veloce Racing enters Extreme E with its ducks in a row. Although it counts five different co-owners, including double Formula E champion Jean-Eric Vergne, the team will be managed by Ian Davies. He brings a bundle of off-road experience thanks to a CV that counts 15 years of service at M-Sport plus a host of rallycross and Dakar Rally engineering roles.

Veloce Racing has been front-footed. Unlike other teams, it's recruited two reserve drivers in Lance Woolridge and Emma Gilmour. They will receive team passes to attend each event and work directly on the car. That provides readily available options for the cockpit in the event of a COVID outbreak that would leave Extreme E's own brace of stand-ins – Timo Scheider and Jutta Kleinschmidt – in massive demand.

Formula 1 design ace Adrian Newey is also listed as the team's 'lead visionary'.

JBXE

Jenson Button followed hot on the heels of fellow Formula 1 world champions Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg by forming his own Extreme E squad to contest the inaugural season. But he's gone a step further than his old sparring partners and will actually race for his own JBXE team as he aims to trace his father John's successful British and Lydden Hill Rallycross Championship roots.

Although such entries are months in the planning, the announcement of JBXE was made just 10 weeks ahead of the maiden desert X-Prix in Saudi Arabia. As such, it's been a tight schedule.

A white and fluorescent yellow livery for the team's Odyssey pays homage to Button's 2009 title-winning Brawn GP machine. Further racing kudos comes from a tie-up with technical partner Lotus Engineering as Geely, the new owner at Hethel, pushes the marque further down the path towards electrification.

ROSBERG X RACING

As a stakeholder in Formula E and the co-creator of the Greentech Festival, Nico Rosberg has been particularly active in the field of environmental sustainability following his shock retirement as the newly crowned Formula 1 world champion in 2016.

Finally making his formal return to front-line motorsport as a team owner, the former Mercedes driver has created Rosberg X Racing (initially called Rosberg Xtreme Racing, but then revised for better logo symmetry). It lands as a



Jamie Chadwick

At 22, Chadwick is the youngest Extreme E competitor. The Williams Formula 1 development

driver has made it clear that defending her W Series crown is the priority in 2021. That means calendar clashes for Greenland and Brazil will likely leave Emma Gilmour taking her place.



Stephane Sarrazin

Jean-Eric Vergne stepped aside from racing in Extreme E to leave space for Sarrazin, who he reckons is a 'once-in-a-generation' talent. It's easier to list the race and rally championships the French racer hasn't achieved success in. But his career is topped by five overall Le Mans 24 Hours podiums.



Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky

The final Extreme E driver to be announced after the 11th-hour collapse of the Techeetah entry, Ahlin-Kottulinsky is the only woman to bag poles and race wins in the Scandinavian Touring Car Championship. A Rallycross Lites cameo is on her CV alongside a couple of seasons racing an Audi R8 LMS.



Jenson Button

Button first tried his luck at off-road racing in the 2019 Mint 400, which ran around Las Vegas. That served as preparation ahead of the Baja 1000. Also, he fared much better than David Coulthard when the pair hopped aboard World Rallycross supercars to film a segment for the BBC's Formula 1 coverage in 2015.

development of the Team Rosberg DTM concern, which was founded by Nico's 1982 Formula 1 championship-winning father Keke.

Many of the crew have come direct from the Audi RS5 Turbo programme, including team principal Kimmo Liimatainen. He drove for Rosberg Sr's German Formula 3 squad in 2002 and, incidentally, finished third in the 1995 Formula A World Karting Championship behind new Extreme E rival Jenson Button and champion Gastao Fraguas.



Molly Taylor

In 2016, Taylor, then 28, became the youngest driver to win the Australian Rally Championship.

Extreme E preparation has not been without incident. Putting a buggy on its roof earned the nickname 'Roly Taylor'. But with a further eight rally titles under her belt, she's set to have the last laugh.



Johan Kristoffersson

Kristoffersson is criminally underappreciated for his dry wit. But his motorsport credentials need little in the way of embellishment. His new employer Rosberg rates him as the greatest rallycross driver of all time. With three World RX titles to his name, Kristoffersson can certainly stake a claim.



X44

SPACESUITMEDIA

Extreme E co-founder Alejandro Agag has no airs and graces about Lewis Hamilton taking his first steps into team ownership by creating X44. Agag readily admits he actively approached the seven-time Formula 1 world champion to join the series. It wasn't the other way around, as convention would have it.

But more than any other person associated with Extreme E, Hamilton is here because of the platform for advocacy that the series offers. Only with this grounding could Agag have managed to attract the biggest name in motorsport. Hamilton will not only use X44 as a way to promote environmental sustainability and gender equality, but also to offer career opportunities for mechanics and engineers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

As should be expected, Hamilton's involvement will be hands-off, and the team management will need tweaks after the news that Marc Hynes will no longer be part of Hamilton's set-up.



Cristina Gutierrez

Another high-ranking Dakar Rally exponent, Gutierrez has finished each of the five editions she's entered.

In that time, she's made history by becoming the first Spanish woman to complete the event in the car class. Earlier this year, she became only the second woman to win a stage.



Sebastien Loeb

Nine World Rally Championship crowns, 14 Dakar Rally stage victories, two World Rallycross event wins and pretty handy at the roundy-roundy stuff too. Loeb's on and off-road credentials are without question. So much so, he has two more top-flight titles than well-decorated employer Hamilton.

TOP 10 LE MANS FERRARIS

In 2023, the famous name finally returns as a works team to the top class in the 24 Hours. Time to look back at the finest Ferraris to have graced the greatest endurance race

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY



Ferrari's long-awaited return to the top echelon of sportscar racing – and the Le Mans 24 Hours in particular – will finally happen in 2023. Despite its half-century as a works team away from the front of the field, the Italian marque is still the third most successful constructor in the history of the famous French enduro, with nine overall victories, behind only Porsche and Audi.

There have been many great Ferrari GTs and sports-racers over the years, which made this list a tough one to put together. The 512, 333 SP and F40 all made big impressions on enthusiasts but mustered just one class win between them in the 24 Hours, despite success elsewhere. The 365 GTB/4 'Daytona' was a multiple GT class winner at Le Mans

and admirably flew the flag in private hands, but narrowly misses the cut in our ranking.

Following the final 512 BB (GTX) appearance in the 1984 event, Ferrari was entirely absent from the 24 Hours for a decade, although the famous Group C Lancias were Ferrari-powered.

The 430 helped spark a new era of success in the GT classes, winning GT2 in 2008 and 2009, before being succeeded by the 458 Italia and the current 488 GTE.

Despite those successful machines, it's the cars of the 1950s and 1960s that really made Ferrari's mark on Le Mans, and they feature strongly in this top 10. For this list, we've looked at the success the cars achieved, chiefly at Le Mans, the opposition they faced, and their 'x factor'. We've also placed an emphasis on outright results, rather than class victories.



Moss and Hill ran with the overall leaders in 1961 with their 250 GT



Enge, Kox and Davies scored GTS class victory in 2003

550 MARANELLO (Prodrive)

KEY YEARS 2002-04

BEST RESULTS GTS WIN and 10th overall (2003), 9th overall (2004)

10

The Prodrive-developed V12 racer had already been successful in the FIA GT Championship and American Le Mans Series, but 2003 would be its finest season. As well as taking four more wins in the ALMS and the first of three consecutive FIA GT drivers' crowns, the car also took on the crack Corvette Racing squad at the 24 Hours in the top GT category.

Prodrive had shown the Ferrari's speed with class pole at Le Mans in 2002, even though its solo entry failed to finish. In 2003 the two Veloqx Prodrive Racing Ferraris qualified first and second in class, were the quickest GTS cars down the Mulsanne Straight and outpaced

the opposition, again led by the Corvette C5-Rs.

The 550 of Kelvin Burt/Anthony Davidson/Darren Turner crashed out after a wheelbearing failure, but Jamie Davies, Tomas Enge and Peter Kox topped the hourly class leaderboard 23 times in 24 hours and came home 10 laps clear of the leading Corvette.

"Our win wasn't as easy as it looked," reckoned Enge. "OK, we had a really big advantage over the Corvettes for most of the race, but the whole event was so physically demanding due to the heat. The Ferrari is a great Le Mans car."

The American V8s got their revenge with a GTS 1-2 in 2004, but Colin McRae, Rickard Rydell and Turner took their Prodrive 550 to third in class and ninth overall.



250 GT BERLINETTA

KEY YEARS 1960-61

BEST RESULTS GT WIN/4th overall (1960), GT WIN/3rd overall (1961)

9

The 'SWB' (short wheelbase) 250 GT Berlinetta improved on the line of three-litre V12 GTs that had begun in the early 1950s. With disc brakes and improved handling, it was the dominant force in its class until the arrival of the GTO in 1962.

Six cars started the 1960 24 Hours and four finished 4-5-6-7, topping their class. Of the two that retired, one was eliminated in an accident and the other suffered an engine failure in the 21st hour.

Pierre Noblet and Jean Guichet took another GT victory and finished third overall in their Berlinetta in 1961, covering a greater distance than the outright 1960 winner. But perhaps the most remarkable performance came from the Rob Walker/North American Racing Team entry of Stirling Moss and Graham Hill. The two Formula 1 drivers rose as high as fourth and comfortably led the GT field before a broken radiator hose led to head gasket failure. They had troubled all but the fastest of the sports-racers, in a car that could genuinely be used as a road machine.

250 GTO

KEY YEARS 1962-64

BEST RESULTS GT WIN and 2nd overall (1962), GT WIN and 2nd overall (1963)

8

One of the most desirable Ferraris ever, the 250 GTO picked up where the 250 GT Berlinetta left off. It kept Ferrari at the forefront of GT racing, which became the category for the world sportscar championship from 1962 until 1965. The three-litre V12-engined GTO took three titles before being defeated by Shelby's Daytona Cobra Coupe, and its reliability helped it score some great overall results against prototypes.

Chief among those was the GTO's first two Le Mans 24 Hours races. In 1962, Pierre Noblet and Jean Guichet won the GT class, finishing second overall and leading a GTO 2-3-6. Jean Blaton and Gerard Langlois van Ophem repeated the feat the following year, when Ferrari filled the top six with an assortment of models.

The GTO got a (less attractive) new body for 1964, and two finished in the top six at Le Mans, but they were behind the GT-winning Daytona Cobra Coupe of Dan Gurney and Bob Bondurant. The writing was on the wall, and the American 4.7-litre V8 forced Ferrari into producing bigger-engined cars in an unsuccessful effort to respond.



Noblet/Guichet GTO took second overall at 1962 Le Mans

PHIPPS

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**330 TRI/LM****KEY YEARS 1962-63****BEST RESULT 1ST (1962)****7**

The 330 TRI/LM was a one-off, based on a 250 Testa Rossa chassis, but it was lengthened, had an engine that was 1000cc bigger and different bodywork, so we've listed it as a separate entry.

It took the lead on lap two and led the way for much of the 1962 Le Mans, challenged only by the 246 SP of the Rodriguez brothers in the first half, and came home five laps clear in the hands of Phil Hill and Olivier Gendebien. Hill also set the fastest lap, finally breaking the record set by Mike Hawthorn five years earlier. So why is a Le Mans winner only seventh on this list?

Le Mans had been largely left to Ferrari by 1962. The Jaguar challenge was confined to privateer GT entries, Porsche was still in the smaller-capacity classes, and the Ford onslaught was yet to begin. Aston Martin (Project 212) and Maserati (Tipo 151) had rapid cars, but they lacked the development or the numbers to really make victory a serious possibility.

That meant Ferrari was bound to win with its array of models, and it was the biggest-engined car driven by the most-experienced pairing that unsurprisingly took a comfortable victory.

312 PB**KEY YEARS 1971-73****BEST RESULT 2ND (1973)****6**

The 1971 312 P – generally referred to as the PB thanks to the existence of the 1969 model of

the same name – had to play second fiddle to the Porsche 917 during its first season. That didn't matter because Ferrari had its eye on the new three-litre regulations for 1972.

That policy worked as Ferrari trounced the opposition, winning 10 of the 11 world championship rounds. The one it chose to skip – Le Mans – was won by Matra, which missed the rest of the season.

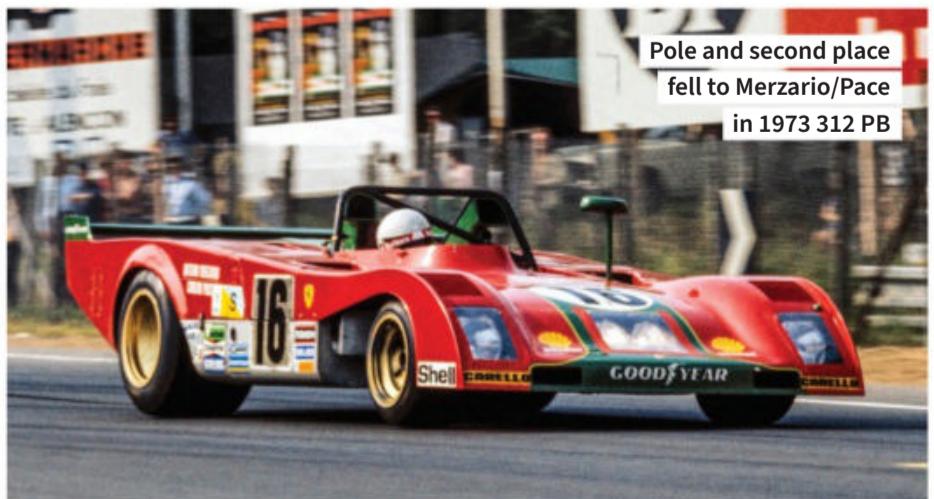
The Italian flat-12 and the French V12 finally battled for supremacy throughout 1973, with Matra generally having the marginal upper hand. At Le Mans, where Ferrari entered three cars and Matra four, the fastest pair of the

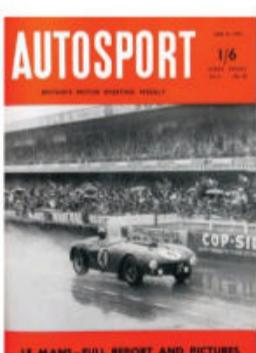
tweaked 312 PBs qualified 1-2. The lead swung back and forth as the various entries gained a slim advantage or hit trouble.

The Tim Schenken/Carlos Reutemann Ferrari looked strong in the lead during the night, but a surprise engine failure put it out, leaving Jacky Ickx/Brian Redman ahead in their 312 PB.

A broken exhaust, tail section replacement and then a fuel leak delayed the duo, helping Matra to the front. Ferrari was still in contention with an hour and a half left when the second-placed Ickx/Redman car also had its flat-12 let go.

Henri Pescarolo and Gerard Larrousse thus came through to win for Matra, with the Arturo Merzario/Carlos Pace 312 PB taking the runner-up spot in the Ferrari factory's final assault on overall Le Mans honours for half a century.





375 PLUS

KEY YEAR 1954
BEST RESULT 1ST

5

This five-litre V12 monster was perhaps not the best tool for the wet conditions that faced competitors at the 1954 24 Hours. It did, however, have one major asset, aside from its prodigious power. Jose Froilan Gonzalez was a driver with the presence (and ability) to match the 375 Plus. Supported by Maurice Trintignant, the Argentinian played a starring role as the Ferrari sledgehammer battled the new wind-cheating Jaguar D-type, a scalpel in comparative terms at 'only' 3.4 litres.

Three works 375s faced three D-types, as well as serious efforts from Aston Martin and Cunningham. The three Ferraris set the initial pace, with Stirling Moss chasing in the quickest of the Jaguars, and the Italian team looked in a strong position when the D-types had to pit for fuel-system adjustments.

Transmission problems put out two of the Ferraris and one of the Jaguars, while the Moss/Peter Walker D-type retired with brake issues. The Sunday therefore became a duel between Gonzalez/Trintignant and the Jaguar of 1953 winners Tony Rolt and Duncan Hamilton.

The V12 struggled to fire several times at pitstops, but the exhausted Gonzalez held on to take Ferrari's second Le Mans win, by a minute and a half.

Umberto Maglioli also won the Carrera Panamericana in a 375 Plus at the end of the season, and Ferrari beat Lancia to the world sportscar crown.

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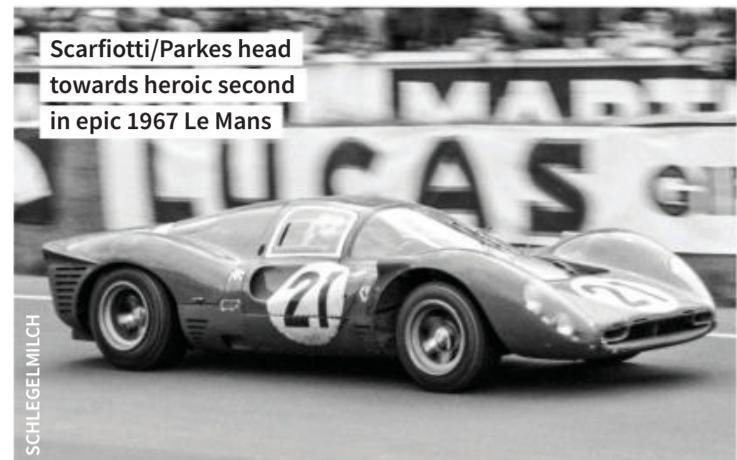


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FERRARI CLASS WINS AT LE MANS

YEAR	CAR	DRIVERS	OVERALL	CLASS
1949	166 MM	Luigi Chinetti/Lord Selsdon	1st	S2.0
1954	375 Plus	Jose Froilan Gonzalez/Maurice Trintignant	1st	S5.0
1957	500 TRC	Lucien Bianchi/Georges Harris	7th	S2.0
1958	250 TR	Olivier Gendebien/Phil Hill	1st	S3.0
1959	250 GT	Jean Blaton/Leon Dernier	3rd	GT3.0
1960	250 TR 60	Olivier Gendebien/Paul Frere	1st	S3.0
	250 GT Berlinetta	Fernand Tavano/Pierre Dumay	4th	GT3.0
1961	250 TR 61	Olivier Gendebien/Phil Hill	1st	S3.0
	250 GT Berlinetta	Pierre Noblet/Jean Guichet	3rd	GT3.0
1962	330 TRI/LM	Olivier Gendebien/Phil Hill	1st	E3+
	250 GTO	Pierre Noblet/Jean Guichet	2nd	GT3.0
	250 GTO	Bob Grossman/Glenn Roberts	6th	E3.0
1963	250 P	Ludovico Scarfiotti/Lorenzo Bandini	1st	P3.0
	250 GTO	Jean Blaton/Gerald Langlois van Ophem	2nd	GT3.0
	330 LMB	Mike Salmon/Jack Sears	5th	P3+
1964	275 P	Jean Guichet/Nino Vaccarella	1st	P4.0
	250 GTO	Lucien Bianchi/Jean Blaton	5th	GT3.0
1965	250 LM	Jochen Rindt/Masten Gregory	1st	P4.0
	275 GTB	Willy Mairesse/Jean Blaton	3rd	GT4.0
	365 P2 Spyder	Pedro Rodriguez/Nino Vaccarella	7th	P5.0
1966	275 GTB	Piers Courage/Roy Pike	8th	GT5.0
1967	330 P4	Ludovico Scarfiotti/Mike Parkes	2nd	P5.0
	275 GTB	Dieter Spoerry/Rico Steinemann	11th	GT5.0
1972	365 GTB/4	Claude Ballot-Lena/Jean-Claude Andruet	5th	GTS5.0
1973	365 GTB/4	Claude Ballot-Lena/Vic Elford	6th	GTS5.0
1974	365 GTB/4	Cyril Grandet/Dominique Bardini	5th	GTS5.0
1981	512 BB	Claude Ballot-Lena/Jean-Claude Andruet/Herve Regout	5th	IMSA GTX
1998	333 SP	Wayne Taylor/Eric van de Poele/Fermin Velez	8th	LMP1
2003	550 Maranello	Tomas Enge/Peter Kox/Jamie Davies	10th	GTS
2008	430 GT2	Gianmaria Bruni/Mika Salo/Jaime Melo	19th	GT2
2009	430 GT2	Jaime Melo/Pierre Kaffer/Mika Salo	18th	GT2
2012	458 Italia GT2	Giancarlo Fisichella/Gianmaria Bruni/Toni Vilander	17th	GTE Pro
2014	458 Italia GT2	Giancarlo Fisichella/Gianmaria Bruni/Toni Vilander	15th	GTE Pro
2015	458 Italia GT2	Viktor Shaytar/Aleksey Basov/Andrea Bertolini	20th	GTE Am
2016	458 Italia GT2	Bill Sweedler/Townsend Bell/Jeff Segal	26th	GTE Am
2017	488 GTE	Rob Smith/Will Stevens/Dries Vanthoor	26th	GTE Am
2019	488 GTE	James Calado/Alessandro Pier Guidi/Daniel Serra	20th	GTE Pro



330 P4

KEY YEAR 1967
BEST RESULT 2ND

4

Finally defeated by Ford at Le Mans, Ferrari responded with the four-litre V12 P4, complete with three-valve cylinder head, for 1967. Despite giving away three litres to the V8 Ford MkIIs, the P4 was the better car and gained some revenge at the Daytona 24 Hours, Ferrari putting on a formation finish as it scored a 1-2-3.

Ford's advanced MkIV swung the advantage back to Detroit as the two titans contested the 1967 24 Hours. Ford's incredible seven-car factory assault dwarfed Ferrari's three-car team (plus a P4 for Equipe Nationale Belge), but the Blue Oval's enormous challenge almost faltered, largely thanks to accidents.

Ferrari pressed its attack in the second half of the race, but Dan Gurney and AJ Foyt always had enough in hand to bring Ford a second Le Mans win. The second and third-placed Ferraris covered more ground in the 24 Hours than any previous Le Mans Ferrari, but heroically lost out to a record-breaking run from the sole remaining healthy Ford.

Ferrari didn't end the season empty handed before the big bangers were banned ahead of the 1968 season. With the MkIV only appearing at Sebring and Le Mans, Ferrari beat Porsche and Ford in the points race.

166 MM

KEY YEAR 1949
BEST RESULT 1ST

3

Debut wins for manufacturers at the 24 Hours are extremely rare. McLaren took victory on the first Le Mans outing for its F1 GTR, but the multiple F1 world championship-winning marque was hardly new. Ferrari was still a young constructor in 1949 and its appearance at the Circuit de la Sarthe, as

Le Mans restarted after the Second World War, helped forge the legend.

Just two privately entered 166 MMs lined up for the 1949 race, and there were many rivals with bigger engines than the Ferrari's two-litre V12. But both of the neat and light Italian machines mixed it with the leading Delahaye, Talbot-Lago and Delage entries from the start.

When the bigger French cars hit trouble and the Pierre Louis-Dreyfus/Jean Lucas Ferrari crashed in the first quarter of the race, Luigi Chinetti moved ahead. The future owner of NART drove for 22 of the 24 hours, entrant Lord Selsdon bringing him brief relief.

The Ferrari's lead grew to four laps at one stage before it started to suffer clutch issues in the closing stages. A charging Henri Louveau, driving the three-litre Delage he shared with Juan Jover, brought the gap down but fell a lap short of denying the remarkable Ferrari, which also won the Index of Performance.



First Ferrari appearance at Le Mans resulted in a narrow victory

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250 P/275 P

KEY YEARS 1963-64

BEST RESULT 2 WINS (1963-64)

2

The 1963 and 1964 Le Mans winners have been counted in one entry because the 275 P was largely an uprated 3.3-litre version of its 3.0-litre predecessor.

The mid-engined 250 P was the car to have in 1963. Although Pedro Rodriguez took pole in the 330 TRI/LM and the Maserati 151 and Aston Martin DP215 entries were rapid, 250 Ps lined up 2-3-6.

Once the Maserati and Aston Martin had dropped out, Ferrari was left in control and victory looked like going to the 250 P of John Surtees/Willy Mairesse. But, late on Sunday morning, fuel was spilled during a pitstop and the car burst into flames after Mairesse left the pits. With the lead Ferrari out, Ludovico Scarfiotti and Lorenzo Bandini moved to the front. The all-Italian combination never lost the lead thereafter, winning by six laps as Ferraris filled the top six.



250 P led Ferrari domination in 1963 (inset) before 275 P won out the following year

Ferrari faced a new challenge in 1964: Ford. John Surtees topped practice with the four-litre 330 P but the 4.2-litre Ford GTs were fast. Richie Ginther grabbed an early lead and Phil Hill smashed the lap record for Ford, but the American challenge soon wilted and none finished.

The reliability of the big cars was poor, leaving Nino Vaccarella and Jean Guichet to take victory in their 275 P, leading home two delayed 330 Ps.

Special mention here has to go to the 250 LM.

Enzo Ferrari tried to homologate it for GT racing as a continuation of the 250 GT line, but even the official Ferrari website now concedes that it was "the berlina version of the 250 P prototype, sharing the same chassis and running gear with just minor modifications".

The 250 LM had its day of days at Le Mans in 1965. As the faster Fords and Ferraris fell by the wayside, three came through to finish 1-2-6, led by the NART example of Jochen Rindt/Masten Gregory.

250 TESTA ROSSA

KEY YEARS 1958-61

BEST RESULT 3 WINS (1958, 1960-61)

1

One of the classic 1950s sports-racers, the 250 Testa Rossa won Le Mans three times in four years, albeit in tweaked form each time as disc brakes and bodywork developments were brought in.

The move to three-litre world sportscar regulations for 1958 could have played into the hands of Aston Martin, which had been building cars to that capacity for years. But the leading Testa Rossa, in the hands of Olivier Gendebien and Phil Hill, outlasted all the Aston DBR1s to win the storm-hit 1958 24 Hours by 12 laps. The 250 TR had already won the Buenos Aires 1000Km, Sebring 12 Hours and Targa Florio, helping Ferrari to retain its sportscar crown.

Aston Martin took revenge in 1959, winning both Le Mans and the title largely thanks to the efforts of Stirling Moss. The TR/59 nevertheless still won at Sebring, and Hill/Gendebien were well ahead at Le Mans until retiring with just over four hours to go.

The factory Aston team was absent in 1960 and, once the early Maserati and Jaguar challenges faded, the Gendebien/Paul Frere Testa Rossa took the lead. A Ferrari miscalculation led to two of the TRs running out of fuel,



Hill and Gendebien cruise after securing their 1958 victory...

but Gendebien managed to coast his car into the pits. The Belgian duo went on to win by four laps, with the NART Testa Rossa of Ricardo Rodriguez and Andre Pilette in second.

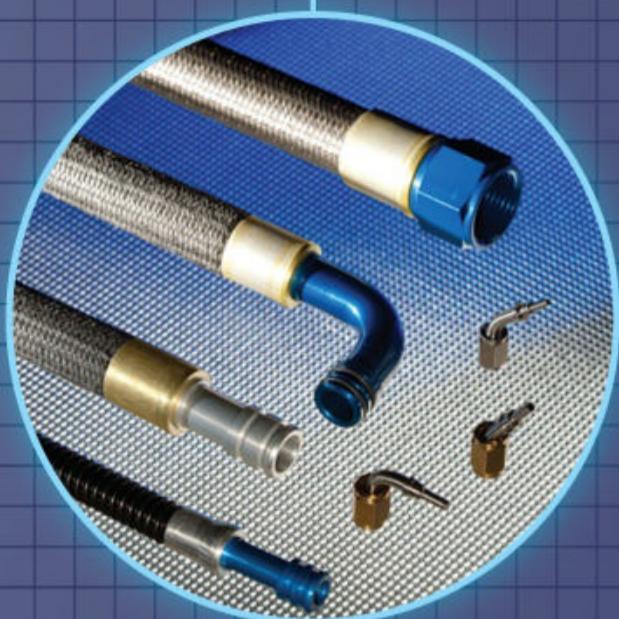
Ferrari's main threat came from within in 1961 (inset, below). The revised works TRI/61 finished first and second, after battles with the spiritedly driven NART example of brothers Ricardo and Pedro Rodriguez, and the sleek mid-engined 246 SP of Richie Ginther/Wolfgang von Trips, which pointed the way to Ferrari's future.

The Testa Rossa was retired having largely ruled the roost for four seasons, with three titles alongside its Le Mans hat-trick helping to establish Ferrari's domination of endurance racing in the early 1960s.



...and Gendebien was in the winning car in 1960, shared with racer-journalist Frere

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HAWKINS

JEWISS SWAPS SINGLE-SEATERS FOR CARRERA CUP

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Former British Formula 4 champion Kiern Jewiss will switch to sportscars in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season, partnering reigning champion Harry King at Team Parker Racing.

Jewiss will make the move having raced in single-seaters, taking the F4 title in 2018 with Double R – and being selected as a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist (now known as the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award) – before graduating to BRDC British F3 in 2019 with Douglas Motorsport.

The 18-year-old finished fourth in the standings in his first year in the championship and had ambitions of taking the title in 2020 but, after securing a win at the opening event, Jewiss left Douglas with three rounds remaining having failed to reach the podium again.

He will now race in the Carrera Cup with Team Parker having conducted a day of testing in the car at Brands Hatch last week. “It’s very different and it’s something I’m going to need to get used to,” he said. “For me, it’s going to be about doing the best job that I can.

“I’m at that stage of my career where I’m trying to become a paid driver and, unless you have the millions to spend on single-seaters, the GT route is the route to go. It was the right time to change to that route. I think there’s a good future with Porsche, they

are in a number of different series.

“Harry [King] is very highly rated by Porsche and everyone in the paddock, Dan Cammish [returning to the category in 2021 with Redline Racing] is a proper pedaller so it’s going to be very tough but I think we will be there or thereabouts.”

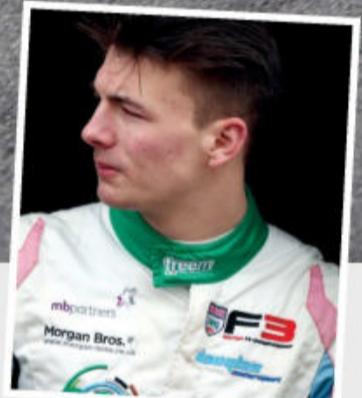
Jewiss was due to have another opportunity to test the car at the official launch day this week, with the season set to begin at Snetterton on 12–13 June.

Team Parker boss Stuart Parker said: “We are delighted to welcome Kiern to the team. Everything has happened quite quickly over the past few months, but he has consistently proved to be quick in the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car despite it being a big change from the single-seaters he has been racing.

“It was no fluke that he was a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist and drove so well in both Ginetta [Junior] and F4, so we’re really happy to have him as part of the team as we aim to repeat as much success in the Carrera Cup as possible.”

Lorcan Hanafin, meanwhile, will continue in the category with JTR for a second season having taken fourth in the standings in his rookie campaign last year. Carrera Cup race winner Lewis Plato will also return to the series with Valluga having missed last season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

STEFAN MACKLEY





Mason (l) and Lancaster
will race Greystone
GT-run McLaren

JEP

Lancaster to drive McLaren GT4

GT CUP

Jon Lancaster will make his debut in the GT Cup this year at the wheel of a McLaren 570S GT4 in the opening round of the season at Donington Park.

The 2015 European Le Mans Series champion and GP2 race winner will compete alongside rookie Rich Mason on a part-time basis with Greystone GT, which will also field full-time entries featuring sportscar aces Adam Carroll and Oli Webb.

Lancaster and Mason will compete in the opening round at Donington next weekend with other outings in the GT

Cup planned but yet to be announced.

"I'm pretty excited to be racing in a UK series for the first time since 2006, and in the McLaren too, which is such an iconic name in motor racing and one that most drivers would dream of getting behind the wheel of," said Lancaster.

"Rich and I have worked together since last October and I can see a clear line of progression in his driving; something that's only going to continue as he gains experience in racing.

"The GT Cup looks super-competitive this year with maybe its best-ever line-up of drivers, and it's great to be a part of it."

BIRD MOVES TO EXCELR8 FOR MINI CAMPAIGN

MINI CHALLENGE

Mini Challenge frontrunner Max Bird has moved to the Excelr8 Motorsport squad for his third season in the category.

Bird drove for Elite Motorsport in 2020, as the team joined the Mini field for the first time, and finished fourth in the points. The former Ginetta GT5 Challenge racer scored three wins over the shortened season – the equal most with eventual champion Nathan Harrison.

Bird is now targeting a full title bid this year after moving to the Excelr8 operation that took Harrison to the crown.

"I had a successful season in 2020, but I wanted more than just podium finishes and race wins so, for 2021, I've joined up with Excelr8 as I believe that they are the right team to help unlock the championship for me," said Bird (below).

"The aim this year is be consistently in the top three in every race, and having a car that is perfectly set up by the team every weekend will be a huge help towards doing this."

"I'm looking to hit the ground running when the season starts, and feel confident about fighting for the title. There are going to be some very fast drivers alongside me on the grid, but I feel I have the experience to be able to pip them to the post."

Bird joins fellow frontrunner Dan Zelos, who was second in last year's standings, as part of Excelr8's line-up, while Jason Lockwood has also been announced as continuing with the team for a second season. He finished third in the Rookie Cup last year, taking a best result of fourth overall.



Hedley targets F4 bid with Fortec

BRITISH F4

British Formula 4 race winner James Hedley is eyeing a title bid with Fortec Motorsport in the category this season, having previously considered a move up to BRDC British F3.

The 2019 Ginetta Junior champion was second fastest during F4's season launch test day at Silverstone last weekend, driving for the Fortec squad that powered Luke Browning to last year's crown. Hedley had a mixed rookie season in single-seaters in 2020, taking four wins with the JHR Developments team and finishing fifth in the standings.

"I'm trying to get the budget and hope to do F4," said Hedley. "I'm still pushing for that and there's still a month to go before the first round."

"Fortec won the championship last year and have got a good team. Luke and I had similar [first] seasons [in F4] – last year, things didn't go my way."

Hedley was just 0.032 seconds slower than Carlin's Roman Bilinski during the official launch day. However, all 18 drivers taking part in the test around the Silverstone National layout – during which track limits were policed – were only separated by six tenths of a second.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

BTCC team boss Hollamby to race father's March 803

CLASSIC F3

British Touring Car Championship team boss Shaun Hollamby is to make a return to single-seater racing in the car raced by his late father in 1980.

Hollamby, who runs the Motorbase Performance and MB Motorsport Ford Focus squads in the BTCC, has bought a March 803 to compete in the Historic Sports Car Club's Classic Formula 3 Championship, beginning with the opening round at Donington Park on Good Friday.

The car was originally raced by Volkspares impresario Olly Hollamby in Formula Super Vee in 1980 as a March 80SV, but was converted into 803 F3 trim in the late 1980s by Mark Bailey. As an 803, it carried Adrian Langridge to the 2019 Classic F3 title.

Hollamby Sr, who died in 2009, was a leading light of British Super Vee racing in the 1970s. He twice won the British



Hollamby hopes to race car at Donington Park on Friday

championship and was also one of the top UK drivers whenever they took on the fierce opposition from Germany and the Nordic countries in the European championship. His son accompanied him to most events, so the acquisition is a sentimental move.

"It's great to get the car back in the family after 40 years," said Hollamby. "For the last two or three years I've been looking at buying my dad's old 803, which in its first incarnation was a Super Vee."

As a driver, Hollamby is better known as a tin-top exponent – he finished runner-up in the Volkswagen Racing Cup

and contested the 2010 BTCC in a Golf run by his AmD squad that currently operates MB Motorsport and will prep the March. But his early days were spent in single-seaters – he raced in Formula Vee, Formula First and then, after winning the 1989 Multisports crown, in Formula Forward.

"I haven't raced an open-wheeler for 31 years!" he said. "So let's see how I get on with it. Let's hope I enjoy it. I'm not in any manner expecting to be competitive, but whenever it doesn't clash with touring cars I'll be out."

MARCUS SIMMONS

Popular Le Mans Classic postponed once again

HISTORICS

The Le Mans Classic, one of the biggest events on the historic motorsport calendar, has been cancelled for 2021 in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in France.

The biennial event was planned for July 2020 but postponed for a year as COVID took hold across Europe. The promoters have now confirmed that it has been further postponed until July 2022.

A statement said: "Due to the

more than capricious changes in the constraints applied to large-scale events, Peter Auto and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest were forced to postpone once again the 10th edition of Le Mans Classic to the first or second weekend of July 2022.

"Indeed, it is totally impossible to organise a miniature of the event which normally welcomes 200,000 spectators who, moreover, will have to participate seated: no more clubs, no more villages, no more activities.



Event was already pushed back from 2020

"In summary, a Le Mans Classic which would not be anymore the celebration of the automobile it has become in 20 years and 10 editions of existence. Unthinkable!"

As well as returning in 2022, plans are in place for the Classic

to also run in 2023 to mark the centenary celebrations of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Meanwhile, the Classic Sports Car Club has cancelled its races at this year's Spa Summer Classic due to the pandemic.

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New junior category set to be launched by SMRC in 2022

SCOTTISH MOTOR RACING CLUB

The Scottish Motor Racing Club has revealed plans to launch a junior motor racing championship for 2022 that will be open to 14-17 year-olds, the first of its kind north of the border.

Motorsport UK permits just four junior championships in order to prevent saturation of the driver pool and confirmed that the SMRC's proposal had been approved in principle last week.

Final approval of the championship is likely to come following a second, more detailed proposal in the coming weeks, as will the confirmation of technical details.

Recently announced SMRC chairman Vic Covey Jr believes the plan for a new grassroots championship is a positive step for the club.

"This is fantastic news for our club and for Scottish motor racing in general," Covey Jr said. "For the future success of the SMRC and the sport, it's essential that we make motor racing accessible to more people, for longer. We believe this initiative can create an accessible, fun and productive environment for more young drivers to get started in Scottish motor racing."

The SMRC will join the trio of established junior championships – the British Automobile Racing Club-administered Junior Saloon Car Championship and Ginetta Junior categories, and the British Racing and Sports Car Club-operated Fiesta Junior Championship – to become the fourth category just for teenagers in the UK.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



Mitchell to race in Combe FF1600

CASTLE COMBE RACING CLUB

Historics ace Ben Mitchell is to chase the Castle Combe Formula Ford Championship this season, with the opening round taking place on Easter Monday.

Mitchell will drive Richard Hudson-Evans' Van Diemen, the updated RF99 previously raced successfully by triple Combe FF1600 champion Josh Fisher and run by Wayne Poole Racing.

"I'm looking forward to testing the Van Diemen for the first time on Thursday," said Mitchell, twice runner-up in the Historic Sports Car Club's Historic FF1600 championship.

"Castle Combe is very special to me because it's where I did my ARDS test and first drove my dad's Merlyn on my 16th birthday."

"Although it's my local circuit, I've only

raced there twice, in HSCC Classic Racing Cars and Historic FF1600, but relish a competitive environment wherever I compete."

"The regulars know their way round Combe, so it's definitely going to be tough, but I'm up for the challenge."

Hudson-Evans added: "Ben did a marvellous job for us at the Walter Hayes Trophy [finishing 12th in the Grand Final and winning the separate pre-1982 Carl Hamer Trophy contest when reunited with a Merlyn Mk20] and Josh has business and family commitments this year so we offered him the drive."

"There is no doubting Ben's speed, nor the car's. The Van Diemen is a Class A contender with winning credentials. It's won there before so we're looking to be frontrunners again."

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

POWELL JOINS WITH MAXIMUM

Will Powell will race a new-to-the-UK Hyundai i30 N TCR in the Touring Car Trophy this year, which will be run by Maximum Motorsport. The Motus One managing director was due to race one of his own team's cars before switching to the Maximum entry. He said: "It's an unexpected change this close to the start of the season but working with Maximum Motorsport, with support from Hyundai Motorsport Customer Racing, is already proving successful."

RETURN FOR G-CAT RACING

G-Cat Racing will return to the British GT Championship this year with a Porsche 911 GT3-R, which the team used in 2019. Amateur duo Shamus Jennings and team owner Greg Caton are set to compete in three rounds, including the opening event at Brands Hatch and the blue riband three-hour race at Silverstone as well as Donington Park.

NEW SCOTTISH FF1600 TEAM

West College Scotland will embark on its first season of Scottish Formula Ford 1600 this year, with Glenn Alcock as its driver. Utilising the Motorsport Academy division of the college, West Scotland has been racing in the SMRC's Citroen C1 Cup since 2019. As well as running Alcock in FF1600, the team will also field Kenny Dock in the C1s, with former C1 driver James McCracken stepping up to the Mini Cooper Cup championship. Alcock's only previous FF1600 experience came in a one-off outing in June 2019, finishing ninth in both races.

MCINERNEY'S MOSLER BACK

Mick McInerney is to race his Mosler (below) again in the Masters Endurance Legends at Donington Park this weekend, after a decade in storage. "It's 10 or 11 years since I raced it in Britcar, so it's just sat idle," he said. "Now I have to get used to driving it again." The car has been completely rebuilt and will be run by Scott Sport.



Welsh events affected amid uncertainty over restart

CORONAVIRUS

This year's opening car circuit racing events at Anglesey and Pembrey have been either cancelled or postponed amid continued uncertainty over when motorsport can restart in Wales.

While the green light has been given for the sport to resume in England from this weekend, there has been no clear indication of when the same can happen in Wales. It follows the cautious approach the Welsh government also adopted last year, which meant coronavirus restrictions limited racing activity to just one small trial meeting at Anglesey.

Against this backdrop, the British Racing and Sports Car Club meeting at Anglesey planned for 5-6 June has been cancelled.

"It's based on a risk assessment of the vulnerability of the date and the difficulty we had was, if competitors weren't prepared to commit to that date until they knew it



was on, then we were struggling with it," said BRSCC chairman Peter Daly.

"Annette [Freeman, Anglesey's commercial manager] had other dates she could offer us but none of the dates fitted with the race calendar we put together. I feel really sorry for the Anglesey team, who are always very welcoming."

The BRSCC will instead run a replacement event at Knockhill the following weekend. "We've taken Caterhams to Knockhill before and had a good event there and they were able to accommodate what we needed," added Daly.

Meanwhile, the British Automobile Racing Club has postponed its Truck meeting at Pembrey from 15-16 May to 19-20 June amid the uncertainty.

"We put the Truck event back to June to give us that extra month's flexibility," explained Pembrey circuit manager Phil Davies.

He added the lack of clarity over when events can resume is "very frustrating and very difficult" and that "we've just got to work through it and keep our costs down to a minimum".

STEPHEN LICKORISH

F1000 brings Jedi name back for invitation class

750 MOTOR CLUB

The F1000 Championship has reintroduced the Jedi name for this season, with its old Invitation Cup being rebranded as the Formula Jedi Cup.

The series is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year and wanted to recognise its

past, having previously been called Formula Jedi before changing its name to F1000 in 2017 to better reflect the 1000cc-engined single-seaters used.

But the Jedi name is now being brought back for the Invitation Cup, which caters for cars not running in the current specification.

"The Formula Jedi brand is part of our heritage and recognises the older non-specification Jedi Racing Cars that with our approval can race on our F1000 grid, where competitors can benefit from many of our extras such as trackside spares, tyre support and social media," said championship manager

Frazer Corbyn.

Interest in the 750 Motor Club category has steadily risen over the past few seasons and it has secured 27 registrations for this year. Among the new entries is former Northern Irish RoadSports champion Mark Crawford and SR1 Cup racer David Tagg.

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Waiting on the starting grid

Yes, motorsport has been given the green light in England from this week, but that's far from being the case across all of the UK

STEPHEN LICKORISH

A slight relaxing of lockdown restrictions, a spell of warm March weather and the English motorsport season beginning. There are certainly some reasons to be optimistic now after so many months where COVID-19 has led to negativity taking over. But the key word in that opening sentence is 'English'. As we have seen throughout the coronavirus pandemic, not everyone across the UK has been affected equally – and that is true once again in a motorsport sense, too.

Even with overnight leisure stays still banned and the government's message being to 'Stay Local', English motorsport has been given the green light and a handful of circuit racing events are planned over the next few weeks. However, it is a very different picture elsewhere in the UK, where the red light remains firmly on. In Northern Ireland, outdoor sport can resume in a couple of weeks – but only for up to 15 people, meaning Kirkistown's planned season-opener on 24 April looks to be a no-goer. In Scotland, the rules are due to be relaxed at the end of this month, slightly earlier than expected, as the uncertainty had led to Knockhill rescheduling its competitive events to begin from June.

But the most significant concern is in Wales. Let us not forget, just one racing event took place in the country in the entirety of 2020 – a small trial 750 Motor Club fixture at Anglesey – as the Welsh government adopted a far more cautious policy over outdoor

"The more we try to explain it to the authorities, the less they want to listen"

gatherings. And that wait for a return of motorsport in Wales is continuing. There is still no clear picture of when events will be able to restart and that has led to the opening circuit racing meetings at Anglesey and Pembrey being postponed or cancelled.

"We've got no idea when we could even begin," says Anglesey's Andrew Crighton, while Pembrey circuit manager Phil Davies adds: "We're in this position where the more we try to explain and go through it with the authorities, the less they want to listen and the more barriers they put up. The problem we're having, and ourselves and Anglesey are working closely on trying to move forward, is they [the Welsh government] just don't understand what we do. We already work with very tight regulations under normal circumstances and it's easy for us to adapt. We've been treated as if we're amateurs and don't know what we're doing."

Amid such uncertainty, the British Racing and Sports Car Club decided to cancel its event at Anglesey on 5–6 June. "The BRSCC were running a big meeting with Caterham, but have pulled that because we just can't say categorically that the government will allow it to happen," says Crighton. "I have sympathy with the clubs because they've got customers to satisfy as well."

"We've been in discussions with the BRSCC throughout and it's a joint decision. Losing a BRSCC race meeting is a million miles from what we would want to be doing – this is not a decision that has been taken lightly."

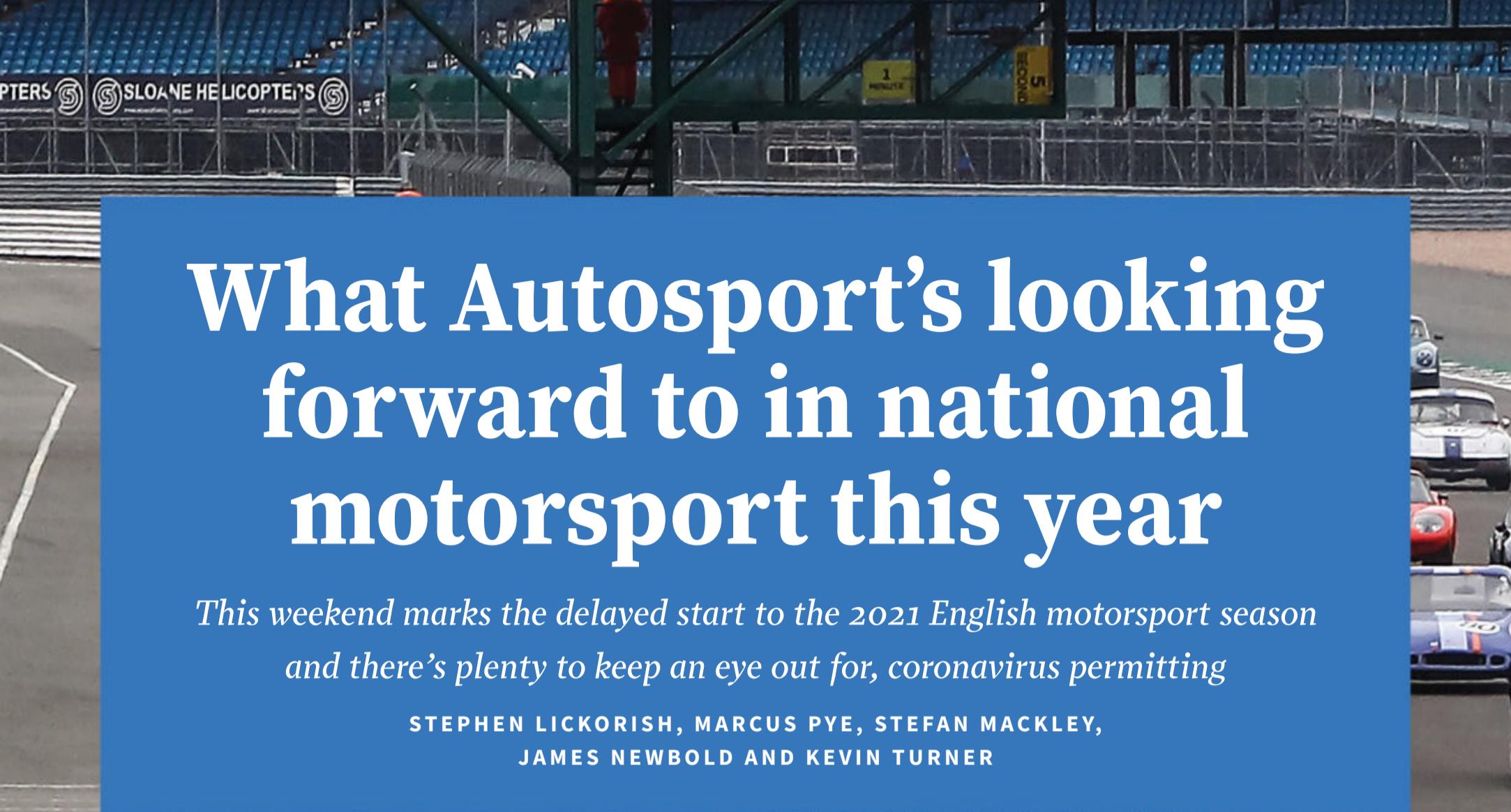
The impact of the lack of activity over the past 12 months was certainly felt when organising clubs were making bookings for the 2021 season. Prior to COVID-19 striking, 14 days of car racing across seven meetings were planned at Anglesey in 2020, but that was almost halved for this year, with eight days across four events – and has now been reduced further by the June BRSCC meeting's cancellation. It is a similar story at Pembrey, with only the circuit-operating British Automobile Racing Club having car events planned there. Davies estimates Pembrey has lost 50% of its usual race meeting bookings across motorcycle, rallycross and circuit racing for this year, adding "it takes a long time to get that back".

Such hesitancy from clubs to commit to dates at the Welsh venues is understandable given what happened last year – and seems justified considering the difficult start to 2021. Although both circuits have been able to keep ticking over with professional teams undertaking testing, the dearth of events is being felt. The good news is Crighton says there has been "no indication that the owner of Anglesey has lost patience" with the situation yet.

"The general sense seems to be we might have to temper the aspirations but, at the end of the day, it contributes to the overall income of the estate," he says. "It's frustrating because we had some ambitious plans to improve the facilities at Anglesey and we had been talking with the government about some degree of support before COVID happened, and then that's gone pear-shaped."

At almost every stage of the pandemic, the different governments across the UK have taken slightly different approaches. Sometimes the additional caution is perfectly justified, other times it is plain baffling – like how four months of racing can successfully take place in England last year and none in Wales. And those differences threaten to put livelihoods at risk. Crighton concludes: "We're as optimistic as we can be. We're working to keep the track in reasonable shape and make sure the barriers are all right and tended. We're really enthusiastic to get back out and to be operating properly." Exactly when that will be remains the big question. ■

→ P66 WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO



What Autosport's looking forward to in national motorsport this year

This weekend marks the delayed start to the 2021 English motorsport season and there's plenty to keep an eye out for, coronavirus permitting

STEPHEN LICKORISH, MARCUS PYE, STEFAN MACKLEY,
JAMES NEWBOLD AND KEVIN TURNER

WALKER

Finally, there are some positive developments in the world of national motorsport. After months of uncertainty, the green light has been given for track action to start in England this weekend and plenty of organisers are reporting pent-up demand to get back racing.

And there is no shortage of things to look forward to in 2021. From exciting events to fascinating title battles and eye-catching new series, here are some of the elements we are most eagerly anticipating for the year ahead. Of course, more than anything else, we just want to be back at circuits, watch some great competition and see spectator banks bustling once more.

But, with a third wave of COVID-19 sweeping Europe, the UK's successful vaccine programme possibly slowing down and so much still up in the air, we still cannot be sure if any of these potential highlights will actually take place. For now, we just have to remain optimistic that the season ahead can still be a good one.

BUMPER GRIDS

There have been plenty of stories about encouragingly large entries on the national news pages of Autosport in recent weeks.

Whether it is Equipe Classic Racing putting on extra races at its Brands Hatch opener to cater for increased demand, five of the six Classic Sports Car Club grids at its Oulton Park meeting quickly selling out, Legends reporting bumper registration levels, the 750 Motor Club securing over 1600 entries within 24 hours of bookings opening, or British Formula 4, which has

struggled for numbers in recent years, attracting an increased entry even though it is due to be the final season with the car.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic creating difficult economic conditions, the continued restrictions mean spending in other ways – like eating and drinking out and holidays – is still not possible and therefore budget to get out on track is protected in some cases. Motorsport can offer escapism from the harsh realities of the current time and it is welcome to see such strong demand. **SL**





BRITISH HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP SET FOR A COMEBACK

Founded in 1947, the British Hillclimb Championship has fascinated me since I was a lad visiting Great Auclum, near Reading, in 1969.

The shortest venue in its illustrious history closed after the 1974 event but the staples at super-steep Shelsley Walsh (in Worcestershire's Teme Valley), writhing Prescott (close to Cheltenham), and Craigantlet (outside Belfast) remain, alongside other hallowed courses. They all guarantee an exciting day out, and the speeds at Shelsley and Wiltshire's Gurston Down – with its hairy downhill start – are jaw-dropping if you've not witnessed them before.

After a full year's lull due to COVID-19, the top exponents are yearning to get going. Sean Gould in the latest of the family's machines – which have carried the speciality's boldest drivers to a record 20 titles since Chris Cramer put the marque on the map in 1985 – may well be the man to beat when the discipline once aptly described as "Formula 1 Up the Garden Path" all kicks off again. **MAWP**

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO **CLUB AUTOSPORT**

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT

FORD GT40 ACTION IN THE AMON CUP

It's not every weekend you get to see a field of Ford GT40s going head-to-head in anger, but that's exactly what two race meetings are due to feature this season. In fact, dedicated races for the fabled machine have only taken place at the Goodwood Revival and Members'



MOTORSPORTIMAGES

Meetings in recent times.

But, courtesy of Motor Racing Legends, the Amon Cup – named in honour of ex-Formula 1 driver Chris who took Ford's maiden win at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1966 – will be held at both the Donington Park Historic Festival (1-2 May) and on the Silverstone Grand Prix layout (30-31 October).

The two 80-minute contests will be open to pre-1966 examples of the widely revered Ford GT – which recorded four Le Mans 24 Hour wins on the bounce between 1966-69 and forged a legendary rivalry with Ferrari that was brought into the mainstream via the film, *Le Mans '66*. The Amon Cup should certainly be a blockbuster event in 2021! **SM**

DOUBLE BRITISH F4 DELIGHT AT THRUXTON

Watching single-seaters battle around Thruxton is a highlight any year. The high-speed nature of the track, with its long straights leading into some heavy braking zones, creates slipstreaming aplenty and means there is no shortage of overtaking – unlike some of the modern venues that slicks-and-wings cars visit around the world.

There have been some epic British Formula 4 contests at the Hampshire speedbowl in recent times and a double treat is on the cards this year as the British Touring Car Championship – and

therefore British F4 – is due to make two visits to Thruxton. Just to add even more intrigue to the mix, the series has tweaked its format to add a fully reversed-grid race to its 2021 weekends, adding to the spectacle of the Thruxton bouts.

One of the side effects of the delayed start to the BTCC season amid the pandemic is the jumbled-up calendar, and that means the series begins at Thruxton for the first time since 2010, making the opener even more hotly anticipated than usual. **SL**

KEEN TAKING ON BARWELL IN BRITISH GT

Another year, another chance to ponder whether Phil Keen will finally end his British GT hoodoo and take the title that has eluded him so many times before. But, in 2021, there's an added dimension to the debate as the 37-year-old will be lining up against the Barwell squad with which he won 13 races in the past five seasons.

Instead, Keen joins the ambitious WPI Motorsport team alongside patron Michael Igoe, who claimed a first British GT win at Donington Park last year with Andrea Caldarelli. A flurry of different co-drivers as the pandemic caused major calendar congestion in 2020 hampered Igoe's

continuity but, with the championship's benchmark driver alongside him this year, there should be no such excuses.

The Silver-Silver graded combinations that dominated last year have been outlawed, so it will be the best Pro-Am pairing that takes the title. Even before factoring in the return of four-time champion and acknowledged Pro-Am master Jonny Adam, Keen's battles against the Mark Lemmer-run Barwell squad he knows inside out will make for a fascinating dynamic to the season, which is due to get under way at Brands Hatch on 22-23 May. **JN**



JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

THE BRC STARTING AT OULTON PARK

Rallying, more than any other discipline, was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the British Rally Championship was no exception as it got just one round in before the season was cancelled.

Already its planned 2021 calendar has changed on multiple occasions since it was first announced last December but, all being well, the return of the BRC should take place at Oulton Park on 31 May – with a further six events planned.

The Cheshire venue is no stranger to top-tier rallying, having played host to the opening stage of Wales Rally GB for the World Rally Championship in 2019.

The Neil Howard Stages is a staple of the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship and it will be interesting to see how regulars of that category fair against the elite of the BRC. But, more importantly, it should herald the return of the discipline across the country for the year ahead. **SM**



SM/PHOTOGRAPHY



WALKER

CASTLE COMBE'S RETRO AND CLASSIC WEEKEND

Run by competitors for competitors, Equipe Classic Racing is one of the great success stories of recent seasons.

The organisation puts on tremendous racing (above) for owners of GT and sportscars of the 1950s and 1960s, and attracts bumper grids drawn from within a sociable fraternity. An ever-increasing following, with an appetite for quality track time, has enabled ECR to continually broaden its horizons and wield considerable power in the circuit hire stakes.

New this July is an exclusive Retro and

Classic Race Weekend at Castle Combe, showcasing its 1950s, Pre-'63, GTS and Libre fields, interspersed with the resident championships. These cars are particularly well suited to the Wiltshire ex-airfield circuit, forced to celebrate its 70th anniversary in muted fashion last season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Turning the clocks back to spotlight the MGs, Morgans, Triumphs, TVRs and Jaguars that were the bedrock of Combe's first two decades will give drivers and spectators alike much to enjoy. **MAWP**

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF THE JAGUAR E-TYPE

One-make racing in historics could be considered something of anathema but can work well. Goodwood's Porsche 911 and Ford GT40 contests, for example, included some fine drivers and great spectacle. And a field of Jaguar E-types should fall into the same category.

Expect to see a number of events celebrating the famous Big Cat's 60th birthday this year, including at Shelsley Walsh, with perhaps the highlight the gathering at the Silverstone Classic at the end of July.

Always a top UK event, the Classic celebrated the E-type's half-century with two Challenge races

in 2011, both won by the three-wheeling example of Jon Minshaw. The Historic Sports Car Club-run and Jaguar Heritage-supported E-type Challenge was a big hit that year, being one of the few series to score five stars in Autosport's rating of new categories. So much so that it continued beyond that anniversary season and there's no reason to think 2021 won't be similarly spectacular.

The Mini Cooper's six decades will also be marked at the Classic. The Mini races at Silverstone and Goodwood in 2019 were incredibly dramatic – and the expanses of the British Grand Prix circuit encourage slipstreaming epics. **KT**



JEP

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT



JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

CAMMISH v KING IN THE CARRERA CUP

Having steamrollered his way to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB title in spectacular style last year, Harry King remained grounded about defending his title in 2021. "There could be a new rookie, or a new driver, who comes in and makes my life hell and a lot more difficult," said King at the end of last season. He was certainly right to be wary.

King did not know it at the time, but one of the drivers attempting to stop him marching to a second crown will be one of the category's most successful racers ever: Dan Cammish (left). Having lost his British Touring Car

Championship seat with Team Dynamics through no fault of his own, Cammish has returned to his roots and is seeking an unprecedented third Carrera Cup title.

Renewing his partnership with Redline Racing – which yielded 31 wins and nine further podiums in three years – the battle between the young man of the moment, King, and the returning master, Cammish, is set to be thrilling. How can you not be excited by the prospect of two of the best drivers in the series' history battling it out for honours? Bring on round one at Snetterton in June. **SL**



HAWKINS

CSCC BREAKING NEW GROUND AT BRANDS HATCH

Not many clubs get the opportunity to race on the legendary Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit. And, through a positive to emerge from the pandemic and subsequent calendar shuffling, the Classic Sports Car Club has the chance to do just that.

If the opportunity of racing at a higher-profile

GT World Challenge Europe meeting was not enough, running seven support races around the longer Brands layout makes the prospect even more exciting. The CSCC has attracted the largest entries of any UK club over the past couple of years and it is likely grids will be at the 46-car capacity

for the August bank holiday weekend event.

Watching the latest machines of the sportscar world is one thing, but adding in the unique cars of the Special Saloons and Modsports series and packed grids of classic tin-tops, produces a great mix and is something to look forward to. **SL**

HSCC IN RARE TRIP TO MALLORY PARK

Mallory Park, stencilled onto rural Leicestershire like a rasher of back bacon around a lake, has been a hotbed of motorised warfare in its present form – with the Shaws' Hairpin extension – since the 1960s. A short distance from Bosworth Field, where in 1485 King Richard III was slain as the Wars of the Roses neared their conclusion, the modern battleground is

regarded as one of the finest club circuits for two, three and four-wheeled combat.

The Historic Sports Car Club's Historic and 70s Road Sports competitors enjoyed double-headers in 2018, but the organisation hasn't visited en masse since 2010, thus September's fixture promises good old-fashioned sporting action across its various categories.

It's a far cry from the 1970s when Formula 5000 and Aurora British F1 cars hurtled round the deceptively technical 1.35-mile track – the quickest breaking 40 seconds – and the invasion of the Bay City Rollers' tartan-clad fans in 1975. Nonetheless, racers get a lot of laps for their money and that pesky hairpin compresses fields to the delight of ardent local spectators. **MAWP**

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT

THE RETURN OF THE GOODWOOD REVIVAL

There's no way of glossing it over, Goodwood was dealt a body blow last year when the pandemic forced the cancellation of its Members' Meeting, Festival of Speed and Revival, the last two run annually since 1993 and 1998 respectively. October's made-for-TV SpeedWeek salvaged something but was never going to rival the experience of 'being there' for the biggies.

The Revival is my favourite, for so much centres on the motor circuit and campus for three days in September. It's not just the competition – although the wartime aerodrome's 2.4-mile perimeter track repeatedly delivers the quality of racing

for which it was renowned in its 1948-66 heyday – but the spectacle of pre-1966 cars and motorcycles driven to their limits on treaded tyres was consigned to history by the advent of slicks and wings. Tributes to stars and cars of yore, wonderful aviation and, of course, period costume code make it truly unique in today's comparatively bland times.

If it's the only race meeting you attend in 2021 it's worth the admission price. But, Goodwood virgins beware, it's addictive!

Another pandemic-related scheduling change is the Members' Meeting moving from its traditional early-season slot to October instead. **MAWP**



THE 50TH FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL

The roll call of past Formula Ford Festival winners who have gone on to the pinnacle of the sport began with Geoff Lees as early as 1975, with Anthony Davidson in 2000 the most recent victor to reach the heights of Formula 1.

It may not be a breeding ground for future F1 talent anymore but that's certainly not to say it's lost any of its magic or appeal, with the Brands Hatch Indy circuit providing a perfect setting for the Kent-engined machines. This year, the event on 30-31 October will celebrate the 50th running of the Formula Ford Festival since it was first held in 1972 – ironically the first four events being staged at Snetterton before finding its permanent home at Brands in 1976.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club's event is followed a week later by another helping of FF1600 action, with the popular Walter Hayes Trophy taking place on 6-7 November. **SM**



MOTORSPORTIMAGES



THE WOMEN IN THE DRIVING SEAT



DOCUMENTARY REVIEW ELECTRIC KINGDOM

For the second time within the space of a month, this Autosport writer is quarantining in a hotel room in Saudi Arabia. That's not a complaint – I'm very fortunate to be travelling and to have escaped the monotony of lockdown back home.

First time around it was in Riyadh for the Formula E season-opener. Now the confinement comes on the West Coast in Jeddah, whiling away the time as the excitement builds for the first Extreme E race.

By virtue of being in Saudi Arabia, there's no access to the BBC iPlayer to catch up on *Line of Duty*. And I'm not comfortable, particularly here, with downloading one of those VPN apps that pretends you're logging on from the UK, which means making do with the local Netflix offering that makes for slim pickings.

One show that I can watch, however, is *Electric Kingdom*, an hour-long documentary that came out last year and is available to view on Amazon Prime. It follows events in the build-up to the first FE race in Saudi Arabia in 2018, which came shortly after women were finally no longer prohibited by law from driving. It also falls alongside the nation's Vision 2030 programme, which aims to shift the economy's dependence away from oil.

Electric Kingdom only has one review on Amazon and that's a two-star rating. That doesn't bode well given the age it's taking the ropey hotel WiFi to load it up. And while this is certainly no masterpiece, three to three and a half stars would seem a fairer assessment.

Fairly early on, Formula E co-founder and ex-Member

of the European parliament Alejandro Agag remarks: "We shouldn't mix sports with politics. We don't get into politics." But even just where the first Diriyah E-Prix is concerned, it was Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who was instrumental in getting the race off the ground. He personally picked out the UNESCO World Heritage Site as the venue. Don't forget also that two months prior to the race, *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi was assassinated in the Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul. That declaration from Agag, then, should be taken with a generous pinch of salt.

In truth, the Formula E round only makes up the final third of this documentary. Part one is more of a focus on the concert held two days before the race. Western artists performing in the country was a major landmark, and singer Jason Derulo is the main point of contact to contextualise the significance of a mixed-gender crowd joining in and dancing along to his hits.

Alice Powell is the figurehead for part two that centres on the Jaguar I-Pace eTrophy support race. She scored victory in the Pro-Am class over local drivers Bandar Alesayi and Ahmed Bin-Khanen. Her strong result also precedes the post-race test, which featured leading female drivers Katherine Legge, Pippa Mann and Simona de Silvestro.

These racers, Formula E pitlane reporter Nicki Shields and a host of local volunteers and diplomats express the significance of female participation. So, on the one hand, while Saudi was massively far behind in its ways, there have been attempts to make some kind of progress. The duress-free tears from some talking heads press home the importance of this change in the law.

The motorsport is fairly peripheral in *Electric Kingdom*. It's not the last word in editing refinement



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OF PROGRESS



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or gripping storytelling, but it has an undeniable value.

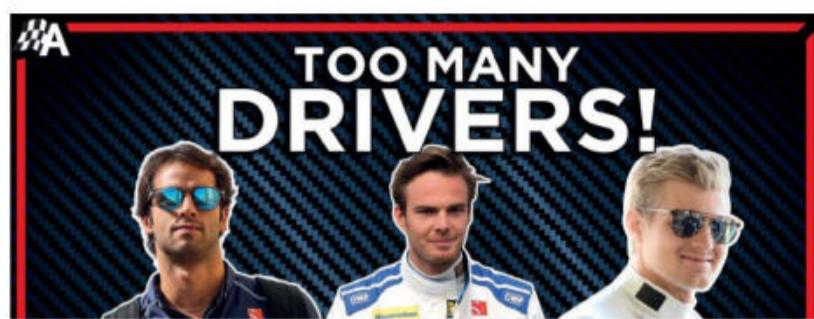
As a documentary on the first round of a Formula E season, it shouldn't have taken the better part of two years to see the light of day. The Jaguar eTrophy no longer exists, certain drivers no longer compete in Formula E and it feels outdated as a result. But that's not really what this show is about. It's closer to a national PR exercise than being a proper sporting or personal interest story, and for that it's not worth actively seeking out. But where *Electric Kingdom* does hold up is in portraying the significance of developments in Saudi legislation. As antiquated as the timeline to allow female drivers might seem to a global audience, for 50% of the Saudi population it was huge and that really hits home.

Forget Formula E figureheads for an hour; the real merit in *Electric Kingdom* comes from the country's own people and what they took from a music and motorsport event that was a landmark in Saudi history.

MATT KEW

YouTube

youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



Giedo van der Garde kicked off 2015 with a legal battle over his position at the Sauber Formula 1 team. Laying claim to a race seat alongside Felipe Nasr and Marcus Ericsson, three into two couldn't go. Autosport explains exactly what happened. [Go to bit.ly/Sauber2015](https://bit.ly/Sauber2015)



autosport.com/podcast



REWIND: THE 2001 FORMULA 1 SEASON



Ex-McLaren designer and engineer Mark Williams joins the Autosport team to remember the 2001 F1 season, which produced three stellar challengers to Michael Schumacher and a harsh lesson for a fourth rookie...

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Extreme E

Round 1/5
AlUla, Saudi Arabia

3-4 April

TV Live BBC Red
Button Sat 0700, 1200, Sun 0700, 1430, Sky Sports Main Event, Sat 0700, BT Sport 1, Sun 1100, ITV1, Sun 1200

Super Formula

Round 1/7
Fuji, Japan
4 April

MotoGP

Round 2/19
Losail, Qatar
4 April
TV Live BT Sport 2, Sun 1730

UK MOTORSPORT

Donington Park MSVR*
3 April
Heritage FF1600, 7 Race Series, Northern Saloon and Sports Car

Donington Park 750MC*
5 April
Bernie's V8s, Bikesports, CALM Porsches, Club Enduro, Locost, Mazda MX-5s

Castle Combe CCRC*
5 April
FF1600s, Saloons, GTs, Touring Cars, HSCC F2, Hot Hatch Challenge

**Behind closed doors*



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Denny Hulme (McLaren-Ford M7A) leads Ludovico Scarfiotti (Cooper-BrM T86B), Dan Gurney (Eagle-Weslake T1G), Lucien Bianchi (Cooper-BrM T86B) and Jackie

Oliver (Lotus-Ford 49) into Portier at Monaco in 1968, past a trackside area that even by the safety standards of the time could be considered sub-optimal. Just five of the race's 16 starters made the finish.

Bianchi took the final podium spot, four laps down, as was Scarfiotti in fourth; then came Hulme, seven laps adrift of first and second-place finishers Graham Hill (Lotus 49B) and Richard Attwood (BrM P126).

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IN DEFENCE OF...

FORMULA 3000

Both under its current guise and as GP2 from 2005 to 2016, the FIA Formula 2 championship has a good track record when it comes to its champions shining in Formula 1. Inaugural champion Nico Rosberg and his 2006 successor Lewis Hamilton have won every world championship title between them since 2014, while of the current grid, Charles Leclerc and Pierre Gasly are established race winners and George Russell came close to joining them in Sakhir last year. That's a clear improvement on the series it replaced, the International F3000 championship (1985-2004).

None of its champions won a world title, and only three (Jean Alesi, Olivier Panis and Juan Pablo Montoya) won a grand prix. GP2/F2 also fares better than F3000 when it comes to champions graduating the following year (75% against 60%). When years of limited promotion were twinned with rising costs, question marks over the F1-relevance of its single-make cars and dwindling driver interest, F3000's demise perhaps was inevitable.

But its worth shouldn't be based solely on its conversion rate of F1 champions, while other perceived issues weren't unique to F3000. For while its case was

hurt by Jenson Button and Kimi Raikkonen bypassing it, that's no different to Max Verstappen skipping GP2 – only then, the FIA responded with a points-based superlicence system to prevent a repeat.

The quality of the grid was usually excellent and while its 1998 zenith (35 starters at Barcelona and Silverstone!) couldn't be sustained, the best drivers shone without DRS gimmickry and the racing was often excellent – see the Spa 1997 slugmatch between Jason Watt and Max Wilson, or Roberto Moreno's 1987 pitlane-to-podium charge in Birmingham.

The open-chassis competition prior to 1996 was an invaluable proving ground for engineers and designers too, and it provided a new home for the Ford DFV engine after it became obsolete in F1.

History would likely remember F3000 differently if Damon Hill (1990), Gil de Ferran (1994) and Tom Kristensen (1997) had triumphed over Eric Comas, Jean-Christophe Boullion and Ricardo Zonta; or if standout rookies Rubens Barrichello (1992) and Fernando Alonso (2000) had returned instead of leaping straight into F1? But surely isn't that the barometer of a good feeder series?

JAMES NEWBOLD

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

The driver to end Hamilton's supremacy?

WE TALK TO RED BULL STAR MAX VERSTAPPEN



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